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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CONTRIBUTIONS
TO
PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION
VOL. 8 **No. 2**

THE
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
OF
SCHOOL READERS
AND OF
METHOD IN TEACHING READING

BY
RUDOLPH R. REEDER, Ph.D.
*Instructor in Theory and Practice of Teaching, Teachers College,
Columbia University*



MAY, 1900
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2

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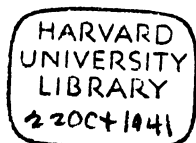
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PREFATORY NOTE

NOTWITHSTANDING the active interest of recent times in the history of education, but little intensive work in that field has yet been done in America. Our early political, social and religious development have had their turn once and again with students and writers of history, and many books have been written upon Colonial customs, fashions, social life, and the industrial and political progress of the early years of the republic. For the history of what was done in the schools of those early times, and how they did it, we have odd scraps here and there in books chiefly devoted to some other phase of national progress, and brief summaries in a few outline histories of education. That the details of an educational development without a parallel in its conception and progress among other nations and systems are of great interest, no one will question. We are not yet so remote from the early stages of our growth as to render it impossible to consult original sources of information.

The first American journal of education was the *Academician*, published in 1818. Text-books by American authors did not begin to appear until after the war of the Revolution. A great deal of very interesting and important historical material belongs to earlier periods. To gather up this material and relate it to our present ideas and trends of progress is the pleasing task of the student of educational history.

The writer of this paper has selected one branch only of the common school curriculum, and attempted to trace it

through the successive stages which have preceded its present status. The chief difficulty in the problem has been to find complete sets and editions of school readers, and to sift out of the numerous series that which was original, of historic worth, and forward reaching in its tendencies and results. The text-book collections in the various libraries which have started them are scattering and incomplete. There are many school readers by American compilers which the writer has not examined. If the attics of New England and the older-settled portions of the Atlantic and middle western States should give up their rubbish, there would no doubt be found stowed away in dingy corners many old text-books of historic interest. When these treasures have been gathered up and brought together, a far more accurate and satisfactory work may be written than the present effort. If interest and research in that direction should be awakened by the following paper, the most sanguine hopes of the writer will be fulfilled.

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PART I

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL READERS

CHAPTER I

EARLY PRIMERS—THE NEW ENGLAND PRIMER

WHEN it was decreed by the forty-fifth canon of the Council of Mainz, in the year eight hundred and thirteen, that children should be taught the “*fidem catholicam et orationem dominicam*,” not only was the extent of elementary instruction thereby determined, but also the subject-matter of school reading-book exercises.

In the Abecedarien of the period the alphabet and ab, eb, ib, columns were followed by the Credo and Paternoster; later, the Ave Maria, and, soon after the thirteenth century, the Benedicite and Gratias were included.

From Charles the Great till Luther no other material than the above appeared in school readers.¹ The Enschedé Abecedarium, which has been claimed to be the first specimen of printing with type, contained the alphabet, the Paternoster, the Ave Maria, the Credo, and two prayers. This was the elementary book of the Romish Church.²

The early primers of the Reformation were not only

¹ Ferd. Büniger, *Entwicklungsgeschichte des Volksschullesebuches*, p. 8 [Leipsic, 1898].

² Paul Leicester Ford, *The New England Primer*, p. 45.

school books but manuals of church service. In fact, the German word for primer—*Fibel*—which first appeared in a "*Kölner Glossar*" in 1419, signifies a little Bible.¹ Henry the VIII. issued proclamations and injunctions against the printing of unauthorized primers in his endeavor to keep his people true to Catholicism. A little later and after his "change of heart," he used the same weapon for fighting the Pope and issued his Reform Primer, designed to teach his people the true doctrine.²

Both Catholic and Protestant primers contained portions intended for children, including the alphabet. Hence, alphabet and creed became united in one book, which became the forerunner on the one hand, of the book of Common Prayer, and on the other, of the modern school primer. Catechisms with the ABC prefixed were common in England and Scotland in the seventeenth century. During the voyage of the *Arabella*, the Puritans were catechised by their pastor on Sundays, and no sooner were they landed than the colony of Massachusetts Bay made a contract with sundry "intended ministers for catechising as also in teaching or causing to be taught the Companyes, servants and their children as also the salvages and their children."³ In this same year, 1629, they voted the sum of three shillings for "2 dussen and ten catechisms."⁴

It is worthy of remark that the first Protestant primer contained no inconsiderable quantity of secular material. This was by no less an author than Philip Melancthon. It was

¹ *Methodik des Deutschen Volksschulunterrichts*, p. 8. Also E. M. Field, *The Child and His Book*, p. 118.

² Field, *The Child and His Book*, pp. 123-128. Also Paul Leicester Ford, *The New England Primer*, pp. 4-9.

³ *Records of the Massachusetts Bay*, I, 37, c. Cited by Ford, *The New England Primer*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 37, h.

entitled "*Enchiridion elementorem puerilium*," Wittenbergæ, 1524. In the same year, a translation of the work appeared in German with the following title: "Philipps Melanchthons *Handbuchlin wie man die Kinder zu der geschrift und lese halten soll*, Wittenberg, MDXIX."¹

I have seen no explanation of the discrepancy in the above dates.

After a brief introduction, beginning with the following statement: "Philipps Melanchthon desires the salvation of all children," follow the alphabet, large and small letters, the vocals, diphthongs, then the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, the Creed, Psalms xlvi., ii., viii., and the Ten Commandments. So far, the arrangement of the book is in the customary Catholic form. After this, however, almost the entire Sermon on the Mount, John xiii., and Romans xii., are freely translated. Then there follow fourteen pages of secular material, namely, sayings of the wise men of Greece.

Luther's child's little primer contained the Lord's Prayer, the Commandments, the Creed and the Catechism, after the fashion of the Catholic primers of the time.

One of the earliest attempts to adapt the subject-matter of the primer to the nature of the child was that made by Marens Schulte in his A B C book, published in 1532. In this book the alphabet is presented with pictures, and a single line for each letter, which is initial with the first word of the line.² The letters and lines are grouped by twos and rhymed, thus introducing the jingle in which the child-soul revels. The first word of the line for A was ape; this ancestral type continued to hold first place in both word and

¹ Ferd. Bünker, *Entwicklungsgeschichte des Volksschullesebuches*, p. 14 [Leipsic, 1898].

² Bünker, *Entwicklungsgeschichte des Volksschullesebuches*, 19-22 [Leipsic, 1898].

illustration with a long line of imitators extending far into the present century.

The following couplets are from the doggerel verse in Klamer Heinrich Bienrod's primer, in which Jean Paul was taught to read :

H h Hase. H h Hammer.

Gebratne Hasen sind nicht boes
Der Hammer gibt gar harte Stoess.

K k Katze. K k Kamm.

Die schlaue Katze frisst die Maeus
Der Kamm herunter bringt die Laues.

S s Sau. S s Szepter.

Die Sau in Koth sich walzet sehr
Das Szepter bringet Ruhm und Ehr.

X x Xantippe X X X X X X X X X.

Xantippe war eine arge Hur
Die X mal X macht Hundert nur.

The early English primers followed the above forms. In 1552 there was printed in England a little tract entitled *Alphabetum Primum Becardi*, which associated rhymes with each of the letters. A little later, an *A B C* was issued under the following heading: "All the Letters whereof ther is a good Document set forth and taught in Rhyme. Translated out of Bas Almaine into English, Anno 1575."¹

THE NEW ENGLAND PRIMER.

The *A B C* catechism brought to America by the Puritans was succeeded near the close of the seventeenth century by the famous *New England Primer*, the most popular textbook of colonial times. It was published by Benjamin Harris, a Boston and London printer, about 1690.²

¹ Ford, *The New England Primer*, p. 25.

² Ford, *The New England Primer*, pp. 12-17.

The first mention of the New England Primer of which there is now any record, was the following advertisement in an almanac called "Newman's News from the Stars," Boston, 1690: "There is now in Press and will suddenly be extant a second impression of the New England Primer, enlarged, to which is added more directions for spelling; the Prayer of King Edward VI, and Verses made by Mr. Rogers, the Martyr, left as a Legacy to his children.

Sold by Benjamin Harris at the London Coffee House in Boston."¹

The New England Primer was a Church book, but included much more than the A B C and Catechism book. It was a very short and cautious step in the direction of a secularization of the course of study. In fact, one of the most interesting features of the various editions of this primer is the facility with which changes are made in the Alphabet doggerel to suit the peculiar religious or political views of the publisher and his patrons. Following are some of these changes:

King Charles the Good
No Man of Blood

was later changed to apply to the reigning monarch,

Our King the Good
No Man of Blood,

and in post-Revolution editions:

The British King
Lost States Thirteen

and in still another edition:

Queens and Kings
Are gaudy things.

¹ See "Note" in *New England Primer*, Hartford edition, 1843.

The rhymes of the earliest editions were of secular quality and without that pious tone so pleasing to Puritan ears. Hence, many changes were made for the purpose of evangelizing the content, of which the following are examples:

Original	C	Puritan.
The Cat doth play, And after slay.		Christ crucified For sinners died.
	D	
The Dog will bite, A Thief at Night.		The Deluge drowned The Earth around.
	E	
An Eagle's flight Is out of Sight.		Elijah hid By Ravens fed.
	L	
The Lion bold The Lamb doth hold.		Lot fled to Zoar Saw fiery shower, On Sodom power.
	N	
Nightingales sing In time of spring.		Noah did view The old world and new.
	T	
Time cuts down all, Both great and small.		Young Timothy Learned sin to fly.

Even the Syllabarium did not escape pious expurgation, and in one edition five of the twelve words composing the five-syllable group are abomination, edification, humiliation, mortification, purification.

That beautiful nursery prayer, familiar to more children perhaps than any other single piece of religious literature—

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take,

is found in the London edition of 1781. The author of these lines is unknown, and this is their first appearance in print so far as is known.¹ The definite article in the second and last lines should no doubt be the second personal pronoun *Thee*, otherwise it is not in the form of a prayer.

Other portions of the text were changed from time to time. Thus, different catechisms appear in different editions. Illustrations also vary. After the revolt of the Colonies it was necessary to change the frontispiece from a royal personage to a representative of democracy, and in the edition of 1776—the printer no doubt being under pressure of an emergency order—the portrait of His Excellency, Royal George III, is merely relabeled as that of the Republican, John Hancock, after the manner of modern newspaper illustrators. In the edition of 1777, a correct portrait appears. In the more Puritanic editions, two-thirds of the rude cuts placed before the couplets represent biblical scenes.

Following is a brief summary of the contents of the edition of 1777: A child's morning and evening prayer; the alphabet, vowels, consonants, capitals, small letters, syllabarium, consisting of ab, eb, ib, etc., and lists of words for spelling arranged according to the number of syllables beginning with monosyllables, and ending with abomination, exhortation, etc.; a lesson for children including such unadorned moral injunctions as: Pray to God, Tell no lies, Call no ill names, Mind your book, Be not a dunce, etc.; a series of wood-cuts associated with the letters of the alphabet in order, beginning with the tree of forbidden fruit, the serpent and our first parents, and all arranged in appropriate rhyme. Thus:

In Adam's fall
We sinned all.

¹ Ford, *The New England Primer*, p. 46.

The Deluge drowned
The earth around.

As runs the glass
Our life doth pass.

Young Obadiah,
David, Josiah
All were pious.

Zaccheus he
Did climb a tree
Our Lord to see.

Next, the Catechism beginning with easy questions: Who was the first man? the first woman? the first murderer? the first martyr? the oldest man? the patientest man? the meekest man? the strongest man? etc.; an infant's grace before and after meat; an alphabet of lessons for youth, using proverbs and other Bible admonitions, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, Dr. Watt's Cradle Hymn, "Hush my babe," etc.; a picture of the burning of John Rogers at the stake, "witnessed by his wife with nine small children and one at the breast," followed by a long posthumous poem of advice and warning to his children. Then the Shorter Catechism, followed by still another brief Catechism by John Patton called *Spiritual Milk for American Babes drawn from the breasts of both Testaments for their soul's nourishment*. The book closes with a tragic scene in which Youth, after alternately listening to the admonitions of Christ and the solicitations of the Devil, weighs his destiny, vacillates, and finally chooses the evil and goes to hell.

For more than a hundred years the New England Primer held the field in America against all comers, and for half a century longer it continued to be used in the schools. In Philadelphia the accounts of Benjamin Franklin and David

Hall show that between 1749 and 1756 that firm sold thirty-seven thousand and one hundred copies. Mr. George Livermore, the first collector of the little book, began about 1840.¹ In 1849 Mr. Livermore states that within the last dozen years one hundred thousand copies of modern editions had been circulated.² Its prayers and catechisms gave it a place next to the Bible in thousands of American homes. It was the daily companion of President John Adams throuout his long career.³

Early editions are among the rarest of school books. Not a single copy of a seventeenth century edition has yet been found by any of its numerous collectors and less than fifty copies of eighteenth century editions.

The two finest collections belong to the private library of Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt and to the Lenox Library, New York City. The latter contains the earliest known edition in existence, that of 1727. It was slightly imperfect, but valued to the writer by the librarian at five hundred dollars. The various editions in this collection are insignificant-looking books as compared with the primers of to-day. The books are from four to five inches long by three inches wide, and they contain from 85 to 100 pages. The six choice specimens in the Vanderbilt collection were bought by Mr. Vanderbilt for six hundred and twelve dollars.³

With the decline of the Puritan spirit after the Revolution came a resecularization of the contents of the New England Primer. Unity in religious belief gave place to diversity. Intimate association with France had scattered the seeds of religious discord and liberalism—not to say infidelity—among the Americans. Early in the present century the

¹ Ford, *The New England Primer*, p. 19.

² Welch, *New England Magazine*, vol. 26, 1899, p. 150.

³ Ford, *The New England Primer*, p. 22.

catechism, the Psalter, and the Bible were displaced by the spelling book and reader.

"The importance of these changes in the New England schools can not be overestimated. Its influence was deep and abiding. The substitution of the selfish and sordid aphorisms of Franklin for the Proverbs of Solomon and the divine precepts of the Sermon on the Mount; the declarations of Webster and Pitt for the lofty patriotism of Moses and Isaiah; the feeble reasoning of Mrs. Barbauld and Hannah More for the compact logic of Paul's Epistles; the tinsel glitter of Byron for the inspiring devotion of David, and the showy scene-painting in the narrations of Scott for the simplicity of the Gospel story of the life of Christ—such a substitution could not take place without modifying subtly but surely all the life currents of the community."¹

But the change demanded was not simply more freedom in the use of secular material. The nature of the child, his inclinations, tastes and desires became dominant factors in the choice and arrangement of subject-matter. The incompleteness of the primer and the Bible as a course of study in reading for the elementary schools began to be felt early in the post-Revolution period.

While the child might learn to read from these two sources, he did not acquire a taste for reading, nor obtain from them information concerning nature, history, the world about him, or the world at large. Between the primer and the Bible there was a wide gap, which offered opportunity for the introduction of new material. It was also at about this time that the influence of great educational reformers like Comenius, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi began to be felt in the common schools. Instead of demanding that the child should adjust himself entirely to the course of study,

¹ Martin, *Evolution of Mass. Public School System*, pp. 101-102.

efforts were making to adjust the course of study to the requirements of the child. The *Orbis Pictus* had blazed out a path in this direction a century before. But it was a crude effort to interest the child in a book of pictures and words—not stories. It was encyclopedic, dry and verbal, more like an illustrated dictionary than a child's reading book.

The movement for the enrichment of the curriculum through the medium of a school reader was pioneered in Germany by Frederick Eberhard Rochow (1734–1805). Rochow published, in 1776, *Der Kinderfreund*. In the preface, the author states that the book is designed “*die grosse Lücke zwischen Fibel und Bibel auszufüllen*.” This book contained about eighty separate selections, mostly of a didactic and religious character, interspersed with interesting bits of information concerning the earth and nature. It was the first step toward secularizing the course in reading in the German elementary schools, and the first school reader in the modern sense of the term. This book was approved by Protestants, Catholics and Jews alike, and was used in the schools of Germany for nearly a hundred years.¹

The first reading-book corresponding to Rochow's *Kinderfreund* in American schools, was Webster's Third Part Reader, published in 1785.

Against all these changes, the New England Primer made a brave fight to maintain its place and influence without sacrificing its individuality as a school book. The increased demand for a primer that pleases rather than tortures, whose illustrations are drawn from the nursery rather than the bitter experience of saint and martyr; for stories and pictures to which the child would return again and again with delight, led to rapid innovations and adjustments in matter and

¹ Fechner, *Geschichte des Volksschul-Lesebuches*, pp. 129–140.

method that marked the dawn of a new era in children's text-books. One printer after another discarded the New England Primer for more attractive compilations. It disappeared first from the city schools, then the village schools, and finally passed out of the rural schools.

Although the New England Primer went down, it "fell in a glorious conflict," and its more than a century of undisputed sway exerted an abiding influence upon the quality of its numerous successors. For more than a half century its uncompromising ideals of duty and obedience were retained in one form or another in the school readers, and thus its deep spirit of piety and devotion, like the patriotic soul of John Brown, went marching on.

CHAPTER II

THE HORN-BOOK, BATTLEDORE, AND SAMPLER

NEXT to the primer, and contemporary with it, the most important piece of early school apparatus was the horn-book. The earliest horn-books were made in England about 1450.

At the Loan Exhibition of the "Worshipful Company of Horners" held at the London Mansion House in October, 1882, after a special effort had been made to bring together as many as possible, the total number of horn-books shown was eight. Andrew W. Tuer, F. S. A., has recently published the second edition of his work on the History of the Horn-Book, in which he has mentioned and illustrated about one hundred and fifty.

In speaking of his search for horn-books the author says he has "badgered the head master or librarian of every public school in Great Britain about horn-books, but not one specimen is to be found." Diligent search has recently brought to light but three copies in this country. Mrs. Alice Morse Earle, author of "Customs and Fashions of Old New England," is quoted in Mr Tuer's book as follows: "There is certainly not a single horn-book in any of our large public libraries or historical collections in America, nor in any of our large private libraries or collections of antiques and curios, but I have found one horn-book, salvage from a New England farm house. * * * It is rather dilapidated, both horn and paper being torn. On the back is the picture of Charles II." Publishing the above statement has made known two other copies.

Since the horn-book was used extensively in the dame schools of colonial times in this country and even down to the beginning of the present century, no doubt if the old attics of New England and the Middle States were searched, a number of these interesting relics might be recovered. They are highly prized, more than three hundred dollars having been paid in England for a penny horn-book.

The horn-book was not a book at all, but a short-handled wood or card-board paddle, usually about four or five inches long by two and a half wide, upon which was pasted a sheet of paper (vellum in the earliest copies) containing first a cross—the “criss crosse,” followed by the Alphabet in large and small letters. The vowels then formed a line and their combinations with consonants were given in tabular form. Next came the usual exorcism,—“In the name of the Father and of the Sonne and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.” Then the Lord’s Prayer, and the whole concluded with the Roman numerals. The paper was covered and protected by a transparent sheet of horn.

So now with state she utters the command,
Eftsoons the Urchins to their Tasks repair;
Their books of Stature small they take in hand
Which with pellucid horn secured are,
To save from Fingers wet the letters fair.

*Shenstone.*¹

William Shenstone learned his letters from the horn-book at a dame’s school in Halesomen in Shropshire.

Sometimes the printed leaf was simply pasted against the slice of horn. If a wooden paddle were used, the margins of paper and horn were protected by strips of brass tacked around the edges. The tacks were hand forged into four facets and crowned with a boss at the top. The boss pro-

¹*The Schoolmistress*, cited by Tuer, *History of the Horn-Book*, p. 200.

tected the horn from being scratched when the paddle was laid on its face.

Usually each child had his own horn-book slung from the girdle by a string attached to the handle.

In the dame schools of New England the "desk book" was suspended by a string from the wall.¹

"For three or fower years space, like to a lamb,
He spends his time in sporting and in gam ;
His wanton courage somewhat then to coole,
His parents put him to a petty schoole.
Then after that he takes a pretty pride
To wear the horn-book dangling by his side.
And was it not well armed with plate and horne—
'Twas in great danger to be rent and torne." ²

The early horn-books had the alphabet, or a portion of it, arranged in the form of a cross, whence the "Criss Cross," or "Criss Cross Row," with its many variants: Christ's cross, Cris Cross, Chrisse Crosse, etc.³

One of the stories in *The Jests of Scogin*, a popular book of tales of the time of Henry VIII., relates "How a husband-man put his sonne to schoole with Scogin." The slovenly boy, almost as big as a knave, began to learn his A B C. "Scogin did give him a lesson of nine of the first letters of the A B C, and he was nine daies in learning of them. And when he had learned the nine Christ-cross-row letters the good scholler said, 'Am ich past the worst now ?'" ⁴

"Opposite her sat, on two benches, twelve or fourteen

¹ Martin, *Evolution of Mass. Public School System*, p. 54.

² Hornbye's *Horn-Book*, London, 1622.

³ Tuer, *History of the Horn-Book*, pp. 60-61.

⁴ Scogin's *Jests*, edition 1796, p. 13.

neat, rosy, chubby little children, learning their Chris-cross-row; and gabble enough they made of it.”¹

“And if you know
The Christ-Cross-Row
You soon may
Spell and read
In this smooth way
From day to day
You will run on with speed”²

From these and other references it would seem that the abacus, or “Christ-cross-row,” as it was commonly called, was the first round on the elementary text-book ladder. The numerical frame still used in common schools is said to be the lineal descendant of the horn-book.

Later editions of the horn-book show the Alphabet in horizontal lines with a cross + before the first letter.

The “Criss-cross” came to be a synonym for the Alphabet, whether it appeared on the old horn-book or in the early primers.

Another interchange of terms and instruments still more interesting is that of horn-book and battledore.³ The battledore was a stout, square paddle used by children in playing battledore and shuttlecock. What was more natural than that this instrument suggesting by its shape the horn-book should be transformed into a veritable wooden primer? Upon one side the Alphabet was painted, impressed or cut, and thus it served the double purpose of book and bat. Not to “know B from battledore,” was a cant phrase of the times, indicating that parlous state of ignorance expressed

¹ Kingsley, *The Water Babies*, pp. 33-34.

² Tuer, *History of the Horn-Book*, p. 79.

³ E. M. Field, *The Child and His Book*, p. 113. Also, Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days*, p. 126.

in the more modern phrase not to "know beans when the bag 's open." The term battledore was at times applied indiscriminately to the horn-book, the battledore, and to reading and spelling books.

In the British Museum is a little book of six pages, dated 1835, containing the A B C, Arabic and Roman numerals, and words of two and three syllables, entitled "The Battledore, or First Book for Children."¹

A paper on the horn-book, in Willis' Current Notes for October, 1855, thus opens: "Horn-books are now so completely superseded by the Battledore and the various forms of "Reading Made Easy" that they are rarely met with, and few persons believe that such was formerly the means adopted to teach the young idea how to shoot." The battledore began to fail between the thirties and forties, but lingered on until about the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851, or a little later.²

Thus, in England, at least, the immediate successor to the horn-book was the battledore. We have found no trace of this apparatus in our American schools, due, no doubt, to the fact that the game of battledore and shuttlecock was never extensively introduced into America.

Another instrument, however, quite as interesting in an educational way, especially for the girls of the colonial period, was the sampler.

Our Puritan foremothers brought with them to America a skill for fine needle-work, and many a painstakingly wrought samcloth has come down to us. Like the battledore, the sampler served a double purpose, but in a more serious way, and therefore better suited to the Puritan spirit, for many a Puritan maiden "in a tedious sampler sewed her mind."

¹ Tuer, *History of the Horn-Book*, p. 404.

² Tuer, *History of the Horn-Book*, p. 414.

Tuer says that the sampler served the purpose of the horn-book to many generations of little girls. In the colonial dame schools and homes little girls were carefully taught to sew, spin, weave, embroider, and knit.

The first samplers worked by the little girls opened with the alphabet. Bible quotations, The Lord's Prayer, hymns, and original verses—often in "dolorous pitch" were the usual compositions thus wrought in the forms of the stitch.

One of the most interesting samplers that I have examined is an heir-loom in the family of Dr. John W. Cook, De Kalb, Illinois. Upon this the alphabet is wrought four times, also numerals to twenty-two, a line of double letters, vowels, and consonants. Separated by artistic designs and patiently wrought in different styles of type are the following lines:

"May heaven's kind hand direct the virtuous maid
And lead her only where the virtuous tread."

"The winter tree resembles me
Whose sap lies in its root
The spring draws nigh, as it so I
Shall bud, and hope, and shoot."

"Deborah Folger is
my name,—12 years of age I wrought the same.
Deborah Folger, 1788."

"May thou, daughter, act with care,
Be dutious and prudent faire;
Let virtue prove thy constant bloom,
For mental charms survive the tomb."

Through the centre of the piece is wrought with elaborate care what was probably intended to be a picturesque representation of the return of the spies from the Land of Promise. The whole is inclosed with an acorn border.

Here are simpler illustrations from the work of younger girls:

"Elizabeth Higgins is my Name,
England is my Nation,
Fetter Lane is my Dwelling Place,
And Christ is my Salvation.

ended in the 8th year of my age, June the 13, Anno
Domini, 1790."

"This is my Work so
you may see what
care my mother as
took of me. Ann bell."

"Our Father eat forbiddin
Fruit and from is glory fell
And we is children thus were brought
To death and near to hell.

Mary Ann Dawson, her work aged 11 years, 1818."

The oldest sampler wrought in this country is probably that of Lorea Standish, daughter of Captain Miles Standish, now exhibited in Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth, Mass. It bears the following:

"Lorea Standish is my name,
Lord guide my heart that I may do Thy will;
Also fill my hands with such convenient skill
As will conduce to virtue void of shame,
And I will give the glory to thy name!"

The sampler was used in dame schools only, and in Colonial homes for the instruction of girls in stitches and letters. The horn-book was generally regarded as the first round on the text-book ladder.

In his "Thoughts Concerning Education" written in 1690, John Locke says that the method of teaching children in

England at that time was the ordinary road of Horn-book Primer, Psalter, Testament, and Bible. These "engage the liking of children and tempt them to read." In the Colonial schools there were three classes. The first class, or beginners, read from the Psalter which contained the Psalms, the Proverbs and the Nicene Creed. The second class was known as the Testament class; the third as the Bible class. Near the close of the seventeenth century the Catechism was incorporated into the New England Primer.

CHAPTER III

WEBSTER'S ELEMENTARY SPELLING-BOOK AND READER

As the New England Primer declined, the spelling-book advanced and took its place as the book for beginners. The early speller combined in one book, alphabet, primer, spelling and reading, and sometimes geography. It was altogether the most important book in the school.

"As the spelling-book was the first manual of instruction used in school, and kept in our hands for many years, I think it worthy of a separate chapter in these annals of the times that are passed."¹

The most popular school book ever published or used in America was the Elementary Spelling-book, commonly known as the "Blue-back Speller," compiled by Noah Webster.

"In the year 1782, while the American army was lying on the bank of the Hudson, I kept a classical school in Goshen, Orange County, New York. I there compiled two small elementary books for teaching the English language. The country was then impoverished, intercourse with Great Britain was interrupted, school books were scarce, and hardly attainable, and there was no certain prospect of peace."² These are the words which Noah Webster never wearied of repeating whenever he had occasion to refer to the beginning of his literary career.

The work originally projected by Webster was "A Gram-

¹ Burton, *The District School as it Was*, p. 24.

² Scudder, *Life of Noah Webster*, p. 33.

matical Institute of the English Language, comprising an easy, concise, and systematic method of education, designed for the use of English schools in America." The Institute was to include three parts, a speller, a grammar, and a reader. The speller was first published at Hartford, in 1783. The grammar and reader were published in the years immediately following. These books were the first works of the kind published in the United States. They were gradually introduced into most of the schools of the country. For the first twenty years the speller bore no other name than "A Grammatical Institute of the English Language." It was then changed to the "American Spelling Book," and still later in a revised form to the "Elementary Spelling Book." The success of the Elementary Speller was immediate and unparalleled. "So magical indeed has been the charm of popularity woven around it, that all desire for or efforts to improvement seem to be paralyzed."¹ During the twenty years (1807-1827) in which Mr. Webster was employed in compiling his American Dictionary, the entire support of his family was derived from the profits of this work at a premium for copyright of less than a cent a copy.²

The spellers in common use at that time, which the Blue-back speller displaced, were "Dilworth's New Guide to the English Tongue," first published about 1740, and William Perry's "The Only Sure Guide to The English Tongue." Webster's speller was modeled after Dilworth's, but was a great improvement upon it. Each book was prefaced with a portrait of its author. Both contained long lists of words, from the simplest combinations to words of six and even seven syllables. Each contained illustrated fables for reading lessons, and short sentences for beginners in reading.

¹ Cobb, *Critical Review of the Orthography of Dr. Webster's Series of Books*, 1827, p. 29.

² Goodrich, *Memoir of Noah Webster*, *International Dictionary*, p. vii.

In Dilworth, these were all taken from the Psalms. In each, the first sentence was, "No man may put off the law of God." But Webster used more freedom in the selection of his material, and many solemn warnings like the following appear, "Be a good child, mind your book, love your school, and strive to learn."

"As for those boys and girls that mind not their books, and love not church and school, but play with such as tell tales, tell lies, curse, swear, and steal, they will come to some bad end, and must be whipt until they mend their ways."

"Zeno, hearing a young man very loquacious, told him that men have two ears and but one tongue: therefore, they should hear much and speak little."

Dilworth classified and arranged his words, if monosyllables, according to the number of letters, whether vowels or consonants; words of more than one syllable were classified according to their accentuation, number of syllables, termination, vowel and consonant sounds, and according to their meaning.

The publication of an American spelling book at the beginning of the young Republic was an event in the history of education in this country compared to which an entire series of school books at the present time is not a circumstance. That Mr. Webster realized the importance of his undertaking is evident from the following statement in his preface to the American Spelling Book: "To diffuse an uniformity and purity of language in America, to destroy the provincial prejudices that originate in the trifling difference of dialect and produce reciprocal ridicule, to promote the interest of literature and the harmony of the United States, is the most earnest wish of the author, and it is his highest ambition to deserve the approbation and encouragement of his countrymen." In one of his essays he says: "The spelling book does more to form the language of a nation than

all other books." "To the influence of the old Blue-back spelling book probably more than to any other cause we are indebted for that remarkable uniformity of pronunciation in our country which is so often spoken of with surprise by English travelers."¹ "It reduced a dozen local dialects to one harmonious language. The early editions of Webster's spelling book contained a number of sharp little warnings in the form of foot-notes which imply that he seized the young nation just in time to prevent the perpetuation of vulgar errors, since these, if they once became universal, would have compelled the hereditary Webster to make them the basis of orthoëpic canons."² Thus Americans should say "wainscot, not winchcott; asparagus, not sparrowgrass; resin, not rozum; dandruff, not dander; chimney, not chimbly," etc. The first edition contained comparatively little beside the columns of classified words, rules for accent, orthoëpy, etc. The content of later editions was greatly enriched by the insertion of fables, economic maxims, brief treatises on morality, and geographical knowledge. The edition in use previous to the revision of 1831 comprised 168 pages, 14 of which are introductory; 66 contain words taken from the dictionary; 29 pages contain the names of persons, places, etc.; 47 contain reading lessons; 8 contain pictures and fables; 4 contain numbers, abbreviations, explanations of the characters used in writing, and a census of the United States. The edition published in 1831 contains several poems, a moral catechism, including abstract treatises on humility, mercy, anger, justice, gratitude, avarice, frugality, industry, etc.; precepts concerning social relations, in which the young man, young woman, husband, wife, parent and child are all briefly instructed and admonished concerning their duties and responsibilities. Eight pictures

¹ Scudder, *Life of Noah Webster*, p. 38.

² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

illustrate as many fables, the first of which is the story of the boy that stole apples, which Mr. Scudder says he has never been able to trace back of Webster, but through him it has become a part of our mental furniture.¹ This story with the picture of the old man in his continental coat, knee-breeches, and high hat; that of the enterprising but unfortunate milk-maid, who would have a green gown with the profits of milk, eggs, and chickens yet to be hatched; poor Tray in bad company; the farmer interviewing the lawyer, whose ox first was and then was not the gored one, were all read and re-read a hundred times by the millions of boys and girls who toed the mark and spelled in a row.

The many successive editions form interesting way-marks of the progress of education. Gradually the material which was in no way adapted to the comprehension of children was eliminated. In editions as late as 1831, we have seen under "Precepts concerning the Social Relations" the following staid counsel:

"Art thou a young man seeking for a partner for life? Obey the ordinance of God, and become a useful member of society. But be not in haste to marry, and let thy choice be directed by wisdom.

"Is a woman devoted to dress and amusement? Is she delighted with her own praise, or an admirer of her own beauty? Is she given to much talking and loud laughter? If her feet abide not at home, and her eyes rove with boldness on the faces of men—turn thy feet from her, and suffer not thy heart to be ensnared by thy fancy.

"But when thou findest sensibility of heart joined with softness of manners, an accomplished mind and religion, united with sweetness of temper, modest deportment, and a love of domestic life—such is the woman who will divide thy sorrows and double the joys of thy life. Take her to thyself; she is worthy to be thy nearest friend, thy companion, the wife of thy bosom.

"Art thou a young woman wishing to know thy future destiny? Be

¹ Scudder, *Life of Noah Webster*, p. 40.

cautious in listening to the addresses of men. Art thou pleased with smiles and flattering words? Remember that man often smiles and flatters most when he would betray thee.

"Listen to no soft persuasion till a long acquaintance and a steady, respectful conduct have given thee proof of the pure attachment and honorable views of thy lover. Is thy suitor addicted to low vices? Is he profane? Is he a gambler? a tippler? a spendthrift? a hunter of taverns? Has he lived in idleness and pleasure? Has he acquired a contempt for thy sex in vile company? And, above all, is he a scoffer at religion? Banish such a man from thy presence; his heart is false, and his hand would lead thee to wretchedness and ruin.

"Art thou a husband? Treat thy wife with tenderness and respect. Reprove her faults with gentleness; be faithful to her in love; give up thy heart to her in confidence, and alieviat her cares.

"Art thou a wife? Respect thy husband; oppose him not unreasonably, but yield thy will to his, and thou shalt be blessed with peace and concord; study to make him respectable, as well for thine own sake as for his; hide his faults; be constant in thy love; and devote thy time to the care and education of the dear pledges of thy love."

The above, the "Moral Catechism," "Domestic Economy" and grammatical instruction disappeared from later editions. The formidable columns of geographical names in alphabetical array—

A bac'o	Cat a ra'qua	Schuy'ler	Wa que fa no'ga.
A bit'i bis	Cat te hunk'	Scoo'duc	Win'ni pic.
A ca'di a	Chab a quid'ic	Shen'brun	Win ni pis o'gy.
A quac'nac	Chat a ho'chy	Sho'dack	Wy a lu'sing.

were replaced by words which the child might occasionally meet in his reading lesson.

The orthoëpic treatise, the long columns of common words, and the fables have suffered little change, and have served to maintain the individuality and identity of the book through the successive variations.

The commercial success of the Elementary Spelling Book has already been referred to. In 1785, the book was selling at the rate of five hundred copies a week. In the preface to the edition of 1818, it is stated that the sale since its publication had amounted to over five million copies. In Goodrich's *Memoir of Noah Webster*, written in 1847, it is stated that about twenty-four millions had been sold. The *International Encyclopedia*¹ states that more than eighty million copies had been sold previous to 1880. On the cover of the edition of 1880 it is stated that "More than one million copies of the work are sold annually." In one of the series of papers on "How I was educated," in the "Forum" for 1889, Dr. William T. Harris says: "On the whole, the chief text-book in the school was Noah Webster's Elementary Spelling Book—the same book that is still published and sold at the rate of twelve hundred thousand copies per annum, being the most generally used of all school text-books." I am informed by the American Book Company that the book is still selling at the rate of hundreds of thousands annually.

That this little book has been the banner text-book of the century in America, no one will question. It is the only common school text-book that saw the opening of the century and is still in the hands of hundreds of thousands of school children at its close. Although it has long since disappeared from the city schools and the more advanced rural schools, and must continue to give way before the advance of more rational methods of teaching reading and spelling, it is still extensively used, especially among the rural schools of the south and west. The old Blue-Back Speller has fought a good fight, and when it has finished its course it may well deserve the epitaph which some one has already suggested: "It has taught millions to read, and not one to sin."

¹ Vol. XV, under *Noah Webster*.

The First School Reader

The first school reader in the modern sense of the term published in America, was "An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking, calculated to improve the mind and refine the taste of youth, and also to instruct them in Geography, History, and Politics of the United States. To which are prefixed rules in Elocution, and directions for expressing the principal passions of the mind. Being the third part of a grammatical institute of the English Language, by Noah Webster, Jr., Esquire."

An advertisement in the edition of 1790¹ states that this book has been introduced into all the public schools of Boston. In the preface the author says: "In the choice of pieces, I have been attentive to the political interests of America. I consider it a culpable fault in our books that the books generally used contain subjects wholly uninteresting to our youth; while the writings which marked the Revolution, which are, perhaps, not inferior to the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes, and which are calculated to impress interesting truths upon young minds, lie neglected and forgotten. Several of those masterful addresses of Congress, written at the commencement of the late Revolution, contain such noble sentiments of liberty and patriotism that I cannot help wishing to transfer them into the breasts of the rising generation."

As may be inferred from the above, the book contains many selections by American statesmen and patriots. Dialogues, narrative and descriptive pieces in prose and verse, selections for the inculcation of moral and religious sentiments appear. Several pages were devoted to "select sentences" "calculated to form the morals of youth." In contrast with its English competitors, Webster's reader contained scarcely any pieces that could be classed as literature.

¹ Mr. George A. Plimpton's *Collection*, New York City.

CHAPTER IV

SCHOOL READERS OF THE PRESENT CENTURY

WEBSTER'S Elementary Speller was not the first spelling book published in America, but his "American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking," seems to have had no predecessors in that field compiled and published in this country. The oldest American speller that I have found is "The Youth's Instructor in the English Tongue or the Art of Spelling improved." "In three parts, with a greater variety of very useful collections than any other book of this kind and bigness extant."¹

Besides spelling, it contains Rules in Arithmetic, forms of bills, bonds, releases, etc. Prose and verse selections are interspersed throughout. It was published at Boston, in 1757.²

"The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book or Youth's Friendly Instructor and Monitor, by Anthony Benezet," third edition having the date 1782, is in the same collection.

Webster's reader was not so successful in driving competitors from the field as its companion, the Speller. The American Preceptor,¹ published as early as 1794 by Caleb Bingham, and The Columbian Orator,¹ in 1797, by the same author, together with the readers of the English author Lindley Murray, which largely circulated in American schools, were formidable competitors.

"Bingham and Webster took advantage of the need of

¹ Mr. George A. Plimpton's *Collection*.

² Welsh, *New England Magazine*, 1899, Vol. 26, p. 151.

suitable school-books and divided the field between them, Webster's Spelling-book outstripped Bingham's Child's Companion, but Bingham's readers such as the American Preceptor and the Columbian Orator held their ground against Webster's."¹

At a time when literature and speech making were almost identical in the minds of the people, it was easy for textbook makers to appeal to the patriotic sentiment of their readers. In this respect Bingham followed Webster. In his preface to the American Preceptor, he says: "In making selections for the following work, a preference has been given to the productions of American genius. * * * Convinced of the impropriety of instilling false notions into the minds of children, the author has not given place to romantic fiction. * * * Tales of love have not gained admission."

As might be expected, a "preference for the productions of American genius" at that time resulted in the selection of much that was commonplace and without literary worth. There is a poem by Pope and one by Cowper; Franklin's story of the whistle appears. Many pieces are upon abstract subjects with no author's name attached, and many are by obscure writers; there are several stories and anecdotes; patriotism is a marked feature. The poetry of the Columbian Orator was from Hannah More, Addison and Rowe. It contains a number of addresses made in Congress, in the British Parliament, and by generals to their armies. Scarcely a great poet is represented. By 1832 the American Preceptor had passed through sixty-four editions and six hundred and forty thousand copies had been printed. Twenty-three editions and about two hundred thousand copies of the Columbian Orator had been printed.

Of Lindley Murray's books, The English Reader, The Introduction to The English Reader and The Sequel to

¹ Earle, *Child Life in the Colonial Days*, p. 144.

The English Reader were used in American schools far into the present century. The three books were intended to form a series. The Introduction was "calculated to improve the younger classes, and to imbue their mind with the love of virtue, to which are added rules and observations for assisting children to read with propriety." There are a half dozen pages of "rules and observations," including directions for observing the common punctuation marks. "A comma marks the shortest pause; the semicolon a pause double that of the comma; the colon double that of the semicolon; the period double that of the colon." In later series of readers, notably the McGuffey's, these directions were refined, so as to give the exact length of pause measured by counting.

The English Reader was the middle number of the three book series. It included "Pieces in prose and verse from the best writers designed to assist young persons to read with propriety and effect, to improve their language and sentiments, and to inculcate the most important principles of Piety and Virtue, with a few preliminary observations on the principles of good reading." The introduction devotes eight pages to the "principles of good reading." The book is divided into the following chapters: Select Sentences, consisting of proverbs, moral maxims, etc.; Narratives, including Bible stories and others of moral content; Didactic, under which are lessons upon gratitude, forgiveness, gentleness, "A suspicious temper," "Comforts of religion," "Dignity of virtue," "Mortification of vice," "Moderation of wishes," etc.; Argumentative, including brief dissertations upon "Virtue and piety, man's highest interest," "The injustice of an uncharitable spirit," "Disinterested friendship," "The immortality of the soul" and others of like unquestioned moral worth; Descriptive, consisting of such selections as the "Creation," "Charity," "The beauties of the Psalms,"

"Character of King Alfred," "The man of integrity," "The character of Queen Elizabeth." Other chapter headings were Pathetic pieces, Dialogs, and Public speeches: under all of which strong meat, not "milk for babes," was served the youth of the early schools of the century. The disposition to separate the reading of the young from that of the mature is of very recent development.

A review of these books written in 1827 says: "The Introduction is full of simple, natural, and interesting pieces. It is, we think, the best juvenile selection in the English language. The English Reader abounds in dry moral and didactic compositions selected partly for their rhetorical elegance."¹

The popularity of the English Reader is indicated in a criticism upon it which appeared in the *Annals of Education* in 1831:² "Ask almost any little boy or girl you meet, 'What book do you read in at school?' the answer will probably be, 'The English Reader,' with perhaps the additional information, 'I read in that now and spell in the dictionary, but I used to read in the Testament and spell in the spelling-book.'"

The Sequel to the English Reader was "designed to improve the highest class of learners, to establish a taste for just and accurate composition and to promote the interests of piety and virtue." In both the Introduction and the Sequel, the same classification of subject matter is observed as in the English Reader. "The famous Reading Made Easy or 'Readamadeasy,' as it was known to the common folk in England, belied its name for many years in this country also, and many a copy was doubtless often stained by the tears of New England boys and girls."³

¹ *American Journal of Education for 1827*, Vol. II, pp. 575-6.

² *Annals of Education for 1831*, Vol. I, pp. 475-6.

³ Welsh, *New England Magazine*, Vol. 26, 1899, p. 152.

In literary worth, the compilations of Murray were greatly in advance of Bingham's. In the former, selections from Addison, Goldsmith, Pope, Gray, Cowper, Milton and Wordsworth are frequent. Bingham exercised much more freedom in the use of secular material, as well as less care for literary merit. But there was also a much greater effort to adapt the subject matter to the interests and tastes of the child. Thus the spirit of adventure finds expression in the stories about Indians and animals.

This first period of American school-book authorship is characterized by erratic efforts and random shots in many directions. Books were not produced in nicely graded series; compilers were influenced more by the public demand and the commercial success of their undertakings than by the problems and theories of education. The result was that many single and isolated primers, spellers and readers were published and used for a brief period within a limited area. Many of these primers were trifling little books in paper covers, three or four inches square, containing the alphabet rudely illustrated, a syllabarium, a few pages of spelling, and sometimes, but not always, a few exercises in reading. Such was Oram's *American Primer*,¹ 1816. In this book, on one page is given a picture of the skeleton of the mammoth with an accompanying table of the weights and dimensions of its parts. It contains no exercises in reading.

More elaborate primers were not wanting. The Franklin Family Primer of which a copy of the eighth edition, 1807, is preserved in the Lenox Library collection, was one of these. The frontispiece is a portrait of Benjamin Franklin. The title page says that it "contains a new and useful selection of Moral Lessons adorned with a great variety of cuts calculated so strike a lasting impression on the Tender Minds

¹ *Lenox Library Collection*, New York City.

of Children." Next after the title page is a brief eulogy of of Franklin, followed by his epitaph "written by himself:"

"The Body
of

Benjamin Franklin, Printer,

Like the cover of an old book its contents torn out and stripped
of its lettering and gilding,

Lies here food for worms :
Yet the work itself shall not be
lost. For it will (as he believed)
appear once more in a new
and more beautiful edition
Corrected and amended by
The Author."

Besides spelling, the Franklin primer contained moral and religious lessons, pictures of Bible scenes,—going into the Ark, Joseph's dream, Moses in the flags, Smiting the rock, etc., examples of early piety, and the Westminster shorter catechism.

The primers of this period took little account of method in teaching beginners to read. If they contained anything besides the illustrated alphabet, it was the catechism or other moral or religious content. But by the end of the first quarter of the century, primer makers began to attend to method and adaptation as well as to matter. A good illustration of this tendency was the "Pestalozzian Primer,¹ or first steps in teaching the children the art of reading and thinking," by John M. Keagy, M. D., 1826. It was one of the first American primers with a device for assisting beginners. The introduction says: "To obviate the inconvenience arising from the child's seeing so much at once, as is usual

¹ *Lenox Library Collection.*

in our common school books, we have invented an apparatus which we have called an "Agnostic Kaleidoscope," which may be used with singular advantage in the early stages of education." It consists of a wooden frame, with a sliding frame divided into any number of divisions to receive the letter blocks. Syllables and words are formed by placing these blocks in the frame. After each letter is presented, it is used in two-letter syllables, then in three-letter syllables. Each lesson on syllables is followed by "a thinking lesson," in which the child tells what he knows about the ideas represented by small groups of familiar words. The words for Lesson I. are "apple, peach, dog;" for Lesson II., "leather, cloth, cat, butter;" for another lesson "wood, stones, cotton, salt." Further on in the book "generalizing lessons" are introduced. For example: "What things are cold, hot, hard, soft?" "Bitter, brown, blue, bright?"

The particular feature of the Pestalozzian Primer, which the author seems to have borrowed from Pestalozzi, was the "thinking lessons." This was a sort of blind groping after object lessons. The size, shape, weight, color, number, origin and use of common articles of the household, the street and the field, were to become rallying points for pleasing and useful thoughts. Exercising the pupils in handling the objects was recommended wherever practicable. It was probably the first primer published in this country in which there was a distinct purpose to make use of the child's environment in an educative manner. The crudeness of the effort is apparent in the utter lack of sequence among the groups selected, and even of the terms composing any given group.

Thirty pages in this book are devoted to syllables and thinking lessons before words are reached.

The disposition to adapt the content of school readers to the needs and capacities of children, naturally led to a more

careful grading of the subject-matter, and very soon to the production of books in the form of series. The production of school readers by grades waited for the more definite classification of the schools. Two and three-book series began with the century. These were not numbered, but named—the middle book of a three-book series receiving the characteristic name, was adapted to the fourth and fifth grades, as now designated; the first book was called the "Introduction," and the third the "Sequel," as with the Murray readers mentioned above. A primer and the spelling-book usually filled out the series.

In 1818 Picket's American School Class-Books were published in New York. This series comprised seven books, and was the most complete series up to that time of which I have found any record. The compilers were A. and J. W. Picket, principals of the Manhattan school, New York.¹ The series included reading, grammar and geography. They were said to "form a systematic gradation from the alphabet to Walker's Dictionary," and were designated as follows: (1) The Juvenile or Universal Primer, intended to prepare learners for the Juvenile Spelling Book; (2) The Speller including spelling, reading and practical English Grammar; (3) The Juvenile Instructor; (4) The Juvenile Mentor, calculated to improve youth in reading and speaking with elegance and propriety, and to imbue their minds with sentiments of virtue, morals and religion; (5) The Juvenile Expositor; (6) A Geographical Grammar; (7) The Juvenile Mirror.

Putnam's three-book series, consisting of the "Analytical Reader," the "Introduction," and the "Sequel," appeared in 1828. A contemporary review² of this series says:

¹ *The Academician*, 1818, pp. 12-14.

² *American Journal of Education for 1828*, Vol. III, p. 225.

"The Analytical Reader and its Sequel are peculiarly entitled to high rank for the copious exercises which they afford for the cultivation of an early and accurate knowledge of the English language. The text is confined to the left-hand page—the right-hand page is devoted to definitions of difficult words, also phrase and group definitions." It was the first American series that I have found in which the reader also attempts to do the work of a dictionary. In this respect it had many imitators, extending down to the present time.

In this same year, namely 1828, was published Samuel Worcester's "Primer of the English Language for the use of families and schools," which is remarkable for its advanced position as to the method of beginning reading. It was the first American primer to advocate the word method. This feature is noticed at greater length under the chapter on Method. Worcester's complete series comprised four books—called primer, second book, third book, and fourth book.¹

The most important American series of readers produced in the decade of 1820-30 was the four book series compiled by John Pierpont consisting of—the "Young Reader," the "Introduction," the "National Reader," and the "American First Class Book." The book added below the ordinary "Introduction"—the "Young Reader"—was not a primer but was intended "to go with the spelling book" whose position as a member of the reading series became thus endangered. Still another member was later added to this series under the title of the Little Learner. The first members of the series appeared as early as 1823. In other readers of the period, much space and attention were given to the rules of the art,—the laws of expression, etc. The usual treatise on inflection, emphasis, accent, punctuation, etc.,

¹ *Annals of Education*, 1834, Vol. IV, p. 532.

was omitted from Pierpont's series. In the preface to the first edition of the American First Class Book the compiler says: "It consists entirely of exercises in reading and speaking. * * * I have observed, however, that that part of school books which consists of brief treatises upon rhetoric, rules for reading, and essays on elocution, is almost uniformly little worn, an evidence that it is little used, in other words that it is of little use. * * * The truth probably is that reading like conversation is learned from example rather than by rule." The series was strongly American. In speaking of this feature, a reviewer in the American Journal of Education says: "Not-with-standing the number and variety of reading books of all complexions, forms, and characters, with which the country is supplied and more than supplied, the truth is, we have depended too much and too long upon Great Britain for elementary works in the different branches of education. It is a recommendation of the National Reader that contributions are so freely drawn from statesmen, scholars, and poets of America, from Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Webster, Everett, Irving, Bryant, Percival, and many others."¹

In the preface of the same edition, Pierpont gives expression to this patriotic sentiment in a most pleasing and convincing manner:

"This country has political institutions of its own, institutions which the men of succeeding generations must uphold. But this they cannot do unless they are early made to understand and value them. It has a history of its own of which it need not be ashamed—fathers, heroes and sages of its own, whose deeds and praises are being said or sung by even the mighty 'masters of the lay,' and with whose deeds and praises by being made familiar in our childhood, we shall be not the less qualified to act well our part as citizens of a republic. Our country both physically and morally has a character

¹ *American Journal of Education for 1827*, Vol. II, p. 620.

of its own. Should not something of that character be learned by its children while at school? Its mountains and prairies and lakes and rivers and cataracts; its shores and hill tops that were early made sacred by dangers and sacrifices and deaths of the devout and the daring; it does seem as if these were worthy of being held up as objects of interest to the young eyes that from year to year are opening upon them, and worthy of being linked with all their sacred associations to the young affections which sooner or later must be bound to them, or they must cease to be what they now are—the inheritance and abode of a free people.”

An interesting observation in the review above quoted is the fact that the country was “more than supplied” with school readers. If such was the case in the twenties, when text-book publication had scarcely begun, what might be said of later decades, especially of the seventies and eighties, and of the present! In view of the later competitive struggle of science, literature, history, morals, etc., for preëminence in school readers, it is interesting to note that Pierpont’s series was compiled upon the basis of literature as the proper field for subject-matter. Selections were made from the best American and English writers. This may account for the long life of this series and for the author’s statement in the preface to the First Class Book, edition of 1854—that so far as the author’s knowledge extended, “not a dollar has ever been paid either by the author or publisher to any agent or any person not an agent, for pushing this book or any one of the series to which it belongs—into schools, or for pushing other books out of them.”

After Pierpont, the next popular author of school text-books was Lyman Cobb, who began to publish a series of school readers as early as 1831. Cobb’s Juvenile Readers appeared in that year. They formed a progressive series of three books. Two other members were later added, making a five-book series. The fourth book was called the Sequel, and the fifth, the North American Reader.

This was the first carefully graded series of readers produced in America. "All words in each lesson not contained in preceding lessons were placed before it with the divisions, pronunciation, accentuation, and definition noted." This system prevailed throughout the entire series.

In contrast with Pierpont's series, Cobb's books aimed more at instruction and the immediate interests of the child than at literature and literary standards. In this respect they were below the level of the former, but perhaps for the same reason they were very popular. The three juvenile numbers contained no literature whatever. They comprised stories, information lessons about animals, and a great many definitions, forming a sort of child's dictionary. Like his predecessors and colleagues, Webster, Bingham, and Pierpont, Cobb appealed to American patriotism in behalf of his books as against the use of the English Reader, which seems to have been a most formidable competitor for American compilers. In the preface to the North American Reader, edition of 1835, he says: "The pieces in this work are chiefly American. The English Reader, the book most generally used in the schools of our country, does not contain a single piece or paragraph written by an American citizen. Is this good policy? Is it patriotism? Shall the children of this great nation be compelled to read, year after year, none but the writings and speeches of men whose views and feelings are in direct opposition to our institutions and government? Certainly, pride for the literary reputation of our own country, if not patriotism and good policy, should dictate to us the propriety of inserting in our school books specimens of our own literature; and it is certainly no disparagement to English reading books to assert that they are not adapted to American schools. The United States have political and civil institutions of their own; and how can these be upheld, unless the children and youth of our coun-

try are early made to understand them by books and other means of instruction?"

In this book the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are inserted. Many of the selections are by obscure writers. Many are of a political and patriotic trend. A number are by Senators, Presidents and statesmen. Good American poetry, however, seems to have been so scarce that Shakespeare, Shelley, Campbell, Byron, Montgomery, and Mrs. Hemans are drawn upon.

Cobb's readers were extensively used in the Middle-Eastern States, especially in the larger cities — Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York and Brooklyn. More than six million copies had been sold by 1844.¹ Two spellers were compiled to go with the series, called the Spelling Book and the Primary Speller.

One of the most charming little series which appeared in the thirties was Peter Parley's (S. G. Goodrich) series, comprising four books called the Picture Book or First Reader, the Little Reader, the Common School Reader and the School Library or Universal Reader. The second book of the series, which is the only one I have found,² contains many beautiful little poems, attractive pictures and interesting stories.

After 1840, reading books were produced almost entirely ✓ in graded series, comprising five or six books in each series. Beginning reading was gradually separated from spelling as ✓ a school exercise, and the first reader became as necessary a book as the speller, which lost its prestige as a primer and A B C book. It was long to remain, however, as one of the most important books of the curriculum.

Among the more popular series produced during the decade from 1840 to 1850 were those by S. G. Goodrich,

¹ Prefatory statement in edition of 1844.

² Mr. George A. Plimpton's *Collection*.

William D. Swan and David B. Tower. Each series was named after its compiler, and each compiler sought to embody some special features which would appeal strongly to his patrons. Thus, Swan's series makes a great point of distinct articulation, and Tower's, of teaching elocution. In the preface to Swan's *Third Reader*, edition of 1854, is the following statement: "As an accurate and distinct articulation forms the basis of good reading, it should receive our first attention in instruction, and be constantly taught until words are habitually delivered out from the lips as beautiful coins newly issued from the mint, deeply and accurately impressed, perfectly finished, neatly struck by the proper organs, distinct, in due succession, and of due weight." Almost every lesson is preceded by an exercise in articulation. Tower's series is no less pronounced in regard to the teaching of elocution. In the preface to the sixth book of the series, edition of 1848, the compiler states that "it has been a leading object of this series to present elocution in all its importance, to define and illustrate its essential points in a lucid and comprehensive manner, and to arrange it in such a system as will best exhibit its natural order and development." In this book about fifty pages are devoted to principles of elocution, pitch, monotone, quantity, rate of movement, voice, semitone, force, etc.

- ✓ The decade from 1850 to 1860 was one of great activity in the production of school books. During this period several series were produced which became national in their distribution. Among the more popular were McGuffey's, which appeared in 1850, complete in six books, by William H. McGuffey; Sanders' six-book series, by Charles W. and Joshua C. Sanders; Hillard's six-book series, by G. S. Hillard; The National Series of Readers, complete in two independent parts, by Richard Greene Parker and J. Madison Watson; The Independent Series, by J. Madison Watson;

and The Progressive Series, by Salem Town and Nelson M. Holbrook.

In examining the contents of these various series, one encounters a dreary sameness, notwithstanding the effort of each compiler to differentiate his series, and to give it distinct commercial and academic or pedagogic points.

McGuffey's series has probably attained the largest sale and widest distribution of any series yet produced in America. In range of subject-matter it swept almost the entire field of human interest—morals, economics, politics, literature, history, science and philosophy. Many a profound and lasting impression was made upon the lives of children and youth by the well-chosen selections of this series, and valuable lessons of industry, thrift, economy, kindness, generosity, honesty, courage and duty found expression in the after lives of millions of boys and girls who read and reread these books, to the influence of which such lessons were directly traceable.

From 1860 to 1880 but little change took place in the character of school readers. There was great increase of quantity, with but slight differentiation of quality.

It was a very active period, however, in the study of method, as I have elsewhere noted. Several new series were compiled during this period, and the great series of the preceding decade largely extended their circulation.

The Civil War annulled all copyrights within the limits of the Southern Confederacy, and several compilers, taking advantage of this opportunity, published "Confederate Series." These were for the most part mere imitations of series previously protected by copyrights. The following quotation from the preface to Chaudron's Confederate Spelling Book is characteristic: "In former times the country was overrun with an endless number of competitive school books in every line of instruction. The present condition of the country has

delivered us from this evil. Will that last hereafter? That is the question—To be or not to be?"¹

In 1869 the Southern Grade Series of five books was published at Charleston, S. C. They were compiled by "Rev. Prof. J. L. Reynolds, D. D.," of the University of S. Carolina. The preface to the series states that "the plan upon which these readers have been prepared recognizes the order which naturally prescribes in the development of the cognitive faculties. The First and Second readers address themselves to perception and memory: the Third reader deals chiefly with imagination; the Fourth deals with the understanding; the Fifth with the reason."

In almost every series produced in this middle period of American authorship, considerable space was devoted to the various accessories of good reading, including the principles of elocution, rhetoric and orthoëpy. In the National Series each of the two upper numbers devotes about fifty pages to Orthoëpy and Expression. Rules for marks and pauses were usually a prominent feature. In the lower numbers of the various series each lesson was usually preceded by a list of the more difficult words arranged for spelling. In the upper numbers, words with appropriate definitions took the place of spelling columns. These definitions were frequently the torture of dull wits and treacherous memories, and on account of them many an unfortunate pupil has "staid after school" to pay the penalty of nature or of mischief.

In the first book of the National Series, called the Word Builder, edition of 1860, we meet again the "word method" which is announced in the preface as a "plan entirely new and original," but which, as already noticed, appeared in Samuel Worcester's *Primer of the English Language* in

¹ *Chaudron's Confederate Spelling-Book*, by A. De V. Chaudron, Mobile, 1865, fifth edition, fortieth thousand.

1828. It also appeared in the first book of the Bumstead series of 1843.

What should be the scope of the subject-matter included within the limits of a series of school readers has always been an open question, and until 1860, in the leading series, the range was usually so extensive that none of the main departments of science or letters were omitted. The early compilers of the century disregarded the English standards of literature as represented in Lindley Murray's series, and pieced out their books with the commonplace of their own writing and that of their relatives and friends. The desire to inculcate morals and patriotism, to impart information, to secure careful intellectual gradation, and to give minute attention to all the formal apparatus of the process of reading, led to hopeless confusion in the principles upon which selection of subject matter was made. Some of the reading books became encyclopedias of information representing various departments of knowledge. Others were entirely subordinated to this or that branch of the curriculum. Elaborate systems were contrived by which the pupils when employed in the exercise of reading should reinforce other departments of knowledge. At one time or another each branch of the curriculum has had its reader attachment. "Pegasus was harnessed to a tip cart."

Since the available material was not, like that of arithmetic or grammar, sequentially related and defined, compilers might choose their own menu and serve it up to suit their own taste. Early in the century, piety, morality, patriotism and literature formed the staple of school readers. "Calculated to inculcate virtue, piety, morality, correct habits, etc."—these are common terms with which compilers set forth their purposes in producing their books. As late as 1839, I find the following in the preface of *The New York Reader* No. 1: "In making these selections, it has been

the aim of the compiler to avoid anything that would have a tendency to corrupt the innocence of the youthful mind. Believing war to be one of the greatest evils which afflict the human race, extracts which might encourage the spirit of it, or operate as an excitement to the love of martial renown, have been excluded. Care has also been taken to avoid selections which would necessarily lead to a taste for the exhibition of the stage." This book is full of pious reflections, lessons on the duties of children, kindness to animals, etc.

The disposition to make the reading book the handmaid of some special department of knowledge or interest, was apparent as early as 1824. In that year there was published the "Agricultural Reader," designed for the use of schools," by Daniel Adams, M. D. In the language of the preface, the scope of this book included "fundamental principles of agriculture, examples of good and bad husbandry, domestic economy, industry, neatness, order, temperance, frugality." It contains lessons on soil, loosening and pulverizing the soil, food for plants, rotation of crops, culture of various grains, vegetables, etc.

Specialization in another direction was shown in the Historical Reader, of 1827, by Rev. J. L. Blake, which included such selections as the following: The death of Anthony, of Cleopatra, of Cæsar, Marathon, The Fall of Rome, The Battle of Trafalgar, The Battle of Erie, etc. An interesting feature of the book is a half dozen wood-cuts among which are the Tower of Babel, and Solomon's Temple.

The first complete series to launch into specialization was the Willson seven book series of 1860, by Marcius Willson, author of Willson's series of histories. The characteristic feature of Willson's readers is the information they furnish along all lines of science, beginning with the near at hand

¹ Mr. George A. Plimpton's *Collection*.

and moving toward the remote, interspersed here and there with lessons on conduct and morals. The following lesson headings are taken from the books indicated: No. II. The barnyard fowls, Fowls going to roost, Respect, Leading the cow, The lark and her young, Indifference, The boy and the rabbits. In No. III. the subject matter is classified under stories from the Bible, moral lessons, and zöology, including the class mammalia. No. IV. takes up human physiology, ornithology, botany, natural philosophy, and sacred history. No. V. Elocution, reptiles, physiology and health, botany, fishes, architecture, natural philosophy, physical geography, chemistry, geology, general history, geometry.

"The leading idea of the higher numbers of the series is to popularize to the capacities of the children the higher English branches of study, and to adapt the whole in a series of inter-related instruction and progress. The natural sciences, and especially the department of animal life, are here presented in a new and attractive light divested of useless technicalities, enlivened by incident and anecdote, adorned by poetic selections, and illustrated in a superb manner. No other series of readers makes any approach to this in extent, variety, beauty and utility of illustration."¹ Even the poetical selections were subordinated to science instruction, and illustrated facts and principles in that special field.

The Willson series contributed to the improvement of school readers, but in a negative way. Previous to their appearance specialization had been sporadic and short-lived. But the climax of this tendency was now reached, and it became strikingly apparent to students of the curriculum that some determining principle of selection must be found to rescue this branch from the hopeless chaos toward which it

¹ Compiler's Preface.

was drifting. What should be the central core of a reading-book series? To the solution of this problem the Willson series was a direct challenge. Science, literature, geography, history, patriotism, morals, had all competed for first place. The material used in specialization was usually exhausted in only one or two books, as in the agricultural and historical readers above mentioned. We have already noted the persistence of the English Reader and the large sale of Pierpont's series, in both of which, and especially in the former, literary excellence was the characteristic feature. The Willson series showed the absurd limit to which the utilitarian principle might lead, and the necessity for finding the true center for this branch of the curriculum. In the struggle for central position, literature gradually emerged from the conflict triumphant over those subjects which are confined within the limits of time and space, and in the new series and supplementary readers which began to appear about 1880, literature took the field, and since then has held it against all comers. It was the beginning of a new epoch in the development of school readers.

In the meantime science, history and the other departments of knowledge have not lost, but rather gained by losing their place in the reading book. Several of them, under the form of nature study, pioneer stories, etc., have been given an independent place in the present enriched elementary curriculum.

For the last twenty years the problem of compiling school readers has been one of selection, arrangement and adaptation within the field of literature. From scraps to literary wholes, has been the order of movement.

The scrappy, hodgepodge compilations of school reading books has long been the object of severe criticism by leading educators. In the Common School Journal of 1839, Horace Mann says that he believes the reading books of that

period contain more separate pieces than leaves: "A solemn inculcation of the doctrine of universal peace on one page is followed by a martial slaughter-breathing poem on the next. A catalogue of the names of the Old and New Testament is followed by a receipt for making good red ink. A humorous disquisition on the head-dress of ladies is followed by another on the future state of eternal happiness and perdition; Milton's Creation of the World is followed by the facetious history of John Gilpin; Thompson's Hymn to the Deity serves as an introduction to Merrick's Chameleon.' The compliers of these early readers, like the illustrator of the *Orbis Pictus*, stuck at nothing. As the latter did not hesitate to set forth the human soul in a wood-cut, so the former withheld not a philosophical disquisition on its essence. The principle of adaptation was quite as little observed as that of continuity. Demonstrative arguments upon abstruse and recondite subjects taxing the acuteness of astute logicians, brilliant passages from parliamentary debates, scenes from dramas interspersed with scraps of geography, bits of history and snatches of poetry were thrown in here and there, to the utter confusion of both teacher and pupil.

The humorous characterization by Horace Mann, in 1839 is matched by the scathing denunciation of President Eliot, as quoted in an article of the *Educational Review* of July, 1891.¹—"I have paid some attention to the readers used in our public schools throughout the country. I have read an enormous quantity of them, and can express the conviction that it would be for the advancement of the whole public-school system if every reader were hereafter to be excluded from the schools. I object to them because they are not real literature; they are but mere scraps of literature, even where the single lessons or material of which they are com-

¹ Hardy, *Literature in Elementary Schools*.

posed are taken from literature. But there are a great many readers that seem to have compositions expressly for children. They are not made from selections of recognized literature, and as a rule this class is simply ineffable trash. They are entirely unfit material to use in the training of our children. The object of reading with children is to convey to them the ideas of the human race. Our readers do not do that and are entirely unfitted to do it. I believe we should substitute in all our schools real literature for readers."

The era of the supplementary reader ushered in about twenty years ago has shown two trends of development. In a great many schools it has simply resulted in a duplication or triplication of series in order to freshen the pupil's interest and facilitate the mastering of the process of learning to read by the repetition of words in new combinations and relations. In other schools supplementary reading is supplied in the form of compressed classics and literary wholes, such as *Hiawatha*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tales of Troy*, *Tanglewood Tales*, *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, *Snow Bound*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Ivanhoe*, etc.

✓ The latest and most complete embodiment of the literary ideal in a regular school book series is found in "The Heart of Oak," six-book series, edited by Charles Eliot Norton.¹ This is the only complete series of school readers yet produced in this country in which all other features are subordinated to literary excellence. The position assumed by the editor is that the reading lesson should never be made "the occasion for instruction in any specific branch of knowledge."² This principle is consistently carried out even in the lowest numbers of the series. Studies in form, color, number, nature study, etc., find no place. The editor is not seriously concerned with the process of learning to read; in

¹ Published by D. C. Heath & Co.

² Preface to edition for 1899.

fact, the problem of method in teaching beginners is scarcely recognized. In a prefatory note to the first book of the series the editor says: "The usual apparatus of a lesson-book has been discarded, and no attempt at what is technically known as "grading" has been made. The system of grading adopted in most books for beginning in reading is largely artificial and mechanical, and is hurtful rather than helpful to progress."

The Heart of Oak series contains no illustrations. The lower numbers of the series are composed chiefly of poetry. The first book is entirely nursery rhymes and jingles. The editor considers "Mother Goose" the best primer, and beginning thus leads on through fable, myth, and fairy tale "into the wide open fields of literature, especially into those of poetry. Poetry is one of the most efficient means of education of the moral sentiment, as well as of the intelligence. It is the source of the best culture. A man may know all science and yet be uneducated. But let him truly possess himself of the work of any one of the great poets, and no matter what else he may fail to know, he is not without education."

The Heart of Oak series is the most radical departure from conventional lines of text-book publication that has taken place since the issue of the Willson series; it represents moreover the opposite extreme in the make-up of subject matter.

While all the leading series of to-day are compiled on the basis of literature as the central subject and the controlling principle of selection, yet there has so far been but little effort at any organization of the material within this field. Most of the series begin anywhere and lead nowhere in particular. The Germans are far in advance of us in working out this phase of the problem, as may be readily seen by an examina-

¹ Preface to *Heart of Oak Series*, Book II, p. viii.

tion of such books as the *Deutsches Lesebuch für höhere Lehranstalten für Sexta*, von J. Hopf and K. Paulsick. The compilers of this book, which is used with the ten year old boys of the *Gymnasien*, have selected "out of the inexhaustible treasures of the literature of the Fatherland the best and most beautiful that it offers with a view to the making of brave, efficient, and cultured youth, and men who will seek the welfare of the beloved Fatherland. What has thrilled the heart of the German people for centuries and still rings in myth, fable, and legend; noble examples of German heroism, courage, power, and stout heartedness, true in all centuries of our illustrious history, are here brought before you. From these pictures of the past your view is carried forward to your father's house and neighborhood. Then it is carried beyond the boundaries of homeland, over mountain and valley, river and sea to foreign lands."¹

- ✓ The school reader should not become the general encyclopedia for the other subjects of the curriculum—nor the drudge of any one of them, it has its own message to bear and its own lessons to teach. Random selections, even of the highest intrinsic worth, will not accomplish this.
- ✓ Selection, adaptation and organization are now needed to complete the movement inaugurated twenty years ago. Our next forward step will lie in this direction.

Summing up the historical development of school readers, the following periods may be noted:

1. The era of one book, the church primer, or Bible.
- 2 ✓ The era of transition from the Bible to secular material, using one or two books between the primer and the Bible.
3. The era of one series.
4. The era of supplementary readers.
5. The era of classic literature into which we are now merging.

¹ *Vorwort*, pp. v-vi.

PART II

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF METHOD IN TEACHING READING

CHAPTER V

EARLY METHODS—THE ALPHABET METHOD—THE BEGINNING OF THE WORD METHOD

THE best exposition of the methods of teaching any branch of the curriculum at any period of its history is revealed in the text-books of that period. The earliest text-books in reading of which we have any traces at the present time were the church primers and the horn-books of the Renaissance period. These books were all constructed on the principle of the alphabet method of teaching beginners to read.

While the alphabet method was the starting point of all modern methods, it was probably not the most ancient of which we have any record. "We are told by Renan in his *Life of Jesus*, that Jesus doubtless learned to read and write according to the method of the East, which consists in putting into the hands of the child a book which he repeats in concert with his comrades until he knows it by heart."¹

The Greeks reverse this process. "Children were not taught words first and then to analyze them, but started with

¹ Compayré *History of Pedagogy*, p. 10.

individual letters, then learned their simple combinations, and so on. * * * From the acquisition of letters the child passed to the study of syllables, and we find syllabizing used generally by the Greeks for elementary instruction in reading."¹

Quintilian, who was invited by the Emperor Galba to settle in Rome, about A. D. 68, draws out a scheme of preparatory education for the family and the school in the first book of his *Education of the Orator*. In this, Quintilian opposes the ordinary custom of not allowing the child to learn to read or write before the close of its seventh year. "Much can very profitably be done by play long before that. It is a mistake to teach children to repeat the Alphabet before they know the forms of letters. These they may learn from tablets or blocks. As soon as the letters are recognized, they ought to be written. Following with a pen the forms of letters engraved on ivory tablets is a good thing. After letters, syllables must be learnt, all the possible syllables in both languages. After the syllables come words, and after words, sentences. The child must not attempt words till he can read and write all the syllables, nor sentences till he is perfectly familiar with words."²

It will be noted that neither of the above methods is the alphabet method. The latter, although preceded by a mastery of the letter forms, was apparently a combination of syllable and word method, the former, a word-rota method.

THE ALPHABET METHOD.

From the earliest period of modern development, however, until within quite recent times, the alphabet or spelling

¹ Mahaffy, *Old Greek Education*, pp. 47-48. Also, Lane, *Elementary Greek Education*, pp. 64-65.

² Davidson, *Aristotle and Ancient Educational Ideals*, pp. 218-19. Compayré *Doctrines de l'Éducation en France, Tome I.*, p. 41; Clarke, *The Education of Children at Rome*, pp. 71-78.

method has been almost universally employed. Every elementary school had its "A B C class," and the thorough mastery of the large and small letters of the alphabet sometimes required several months. "No wonder that some should go to school and say A, B, C for a whole year, and still find themselves strangers to some of the sable company."¹ "Still do I remember the delight of that winter evening when I received into my hand the A, B, C book from the town with pencil to serve as pointer attached to it, on the corner of which were written in real gold letters the contents of the first page, which consisted of alternate red and black letters."²

When the alphabet was learned, two-letter syllables were taken up and learned by spelling, then three-letter syllables, like bla, cla, fla, etc., and monosyllabic words. Several of the first pages of the old spelling books were filled with such nonsense-columns. It was assumed that there was a necessary connection between naming the letters of a word and pronouncing the word. No other approach to the pronunciation of the printed symbol was imagined by the great majority of teachers. So universal was this opinion, that it passed into proverb: "You must spell before you can read," expressed the idea of inexorable sequence. In every school, children might be seen at all hours of the session laboriously working through the words of the reading or spelling lesson, letter by letter, whispering each letter in turn. The spelling habit once formed, remained with the pupil for many years. In the lower classes the mechanical effort required for the mastery of each successive word often precluded the possibility of associating ideas into thought relations.

The ordeal of mastering the alphabet was in rare in-

¹ Burton, *The District School as it Was*, p. 73.

² Richter's *Levana*, Autobiography, p. 16.

stances relieved somewhat, as in case of the stupid son of Herodes Atticus, the Greek, who purchased twenty-four slaves as playmates for his boy, giving to each the name of a letter of the Greek alphabet.¹

A more palatable method was that described by Matthew Prior:

"To master John the English maid
A horn-book gives of ginger bread
And that the child may learn
the better,
As he can name, he eats the letter,
Proceeding thus with vast delight
He spells and gnaws from left
to right."²

The great leader of the Philanthropinum, Bernhard Basedow, (1723-1790), was a strong advocate of the ginger-bread method of learning to read. Basedow's theory may be compressed into the single statement,—"*Die Kinder müssen das Lesen spielend erlernen.*" It was the old alphabet method made sugar-sweet. To carry out his method completely with a school would require a special school baker. "The children must have breakfast, and it is not necessary for any child to eat the alphabet more than three weeks. The cost of shaping the dough into letters is less than a half penny daily for each child. This makes three pence a week, or for four weeks, *einen groschen*. The acquisition is surely worth so much, and is possible even to the poor children. In each large city there should be *ein eigener schulbäcker*, or with each baker a special basket for school wares."³ Hot spiced ginger-bread, sometimes called book ginger-bread, impressed

¹ Clarke, *The Education of Children at Rome*, p. 74.

² Prior, *Alma*, Canto II, p. 64.

³ Kehr, *Geschichte des Leseunterrichts*, p. 59.

with the alphabet and sold at a haif penny a slice, was cried in the streets of London until early in the present century.¹

“The bakers to increase their trade,
Made Alphabets of ginger bread,
That folks might swallow what they read
All the letters were digested
Hateful ignorance detested.”²

In the latter part of the eighteenth century the Philanthropinists introduced into their schools the so-called *Lesekasten* or *Lesemachinen*, for the purpose of smoothing the way for the first steps in reading. This apparatus consisted of an oblong table with two legs attached by hinges to one side, while the opposite edge rested on the floor. The top was marked off by longitudinal strips for retaining movable alphabet blocks.

There have been many variations and improvements in these mechanical devices, extending down to the present time. The main features of the improvements have been in the direction of an easier and more rapid formation and manipulation of script and print letters, sentence building, phonetic grouping, etc.

A Lottery Book³ for Children was the name of a device used in colonial days, in this country. The author thought that the only difficulty in teaching children to read was in keeping their minds from roaming, and to “prevent this precipitancy” was the object of the Lottery Book. On one side of each leaf was a letter, on the other, a picture. As soon as the child could speak, it should thrust a pin through the leaf from the picture side at the letter on the other side,

¹ Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days*, p. 124.

² Tuer, *History of the Horn-Book*, p. 441.

³ A New Lottery Book of Birds and Beasts for Children to Learn their Letters by as soon as they can Speak, 1771, in Mr. George A. Plimpton's *Collection*.

and should continue to do so until the letter was pierced. It was a sort of pin target practice—"sight unseen." "Turning the leaf after each trial, the attention of the child would be fixed so often and so long on the letter that it would "ever after be remembered."¹

The number and variety of these devices are almost as bewildering to the student of method as most of them must have been to the pupils who were subjected to their processes.

*"Wir suchen viele Künste
Und kommen weiter von dem Ziel."*

The development of the picture, as an aid to the pupil in learning to read, forms an interesting chapter in the history of school reading books. Its function varied with the views of different authors as to how beginners should be introduced to the subject. In one set of primers the picture of an animal supposed to produce a sound suggestive of the sound of the letter was connected with each letter of the alphabet. Thus, the picture of a bleating sheep for a, of a lowing cow for m, a hissing serpent for s, and a buzzing insect for z. In another set of primers the picture was used to aid the pupil by means of an associated form which resembled the shape of the letters. Thus, o resembles the shape of a driver's lips when he says "ho!" w, resembles the crawling worm. The picture was also used in teaching phonetic combinations. Thus, a woman scaring chickens represented the German sch and the English sh. As early as 1534, Valentin Ickelsamer, the father of German grammar, used the "device of placing the picture of an animal, its printed name, and the letter whose sound was most like the animal's voice or cry in parallel columns."² The associa-

¹ McMaster, *History of the American People*, Vol. II, p. 571.

² Hall, *How to Teach Reading*, p. 2. Also, Bünger, *Entwicklungsgeschichte des Volksschullesebuches*, pp. 26-27.

tion between picture and letter was sometimes strengthened by the use of rhyme :

"A was an archer that shot at a frog."

"B was a baker that had a big dog."

Pictures for the instruction and amusement of children outside of the illustrated alphabet did not appear until about a century later, and first in the *Orbis Pictus* of Comenius. This book was published in Nuremberg in 1657, and for more than one hundred years was the most popular textbook in Europe. It is too well known to require more than a brief notice here. It was the first illustrated schoolbook, except the primer and the Bible, the first recognition of the importance and value of the picture in teaching children, the first attempt at object-lesson instruction, and the beginning of the "word-method" in teaching reading. It was translated into ten European and four Asiatic languages. In the preface to the English translation of 1659 by Charles Hoole is the following statement: "It will afford a device for learning to read more easily than hereofore, especially having a symbolical alphabet set before it, to wit, the characters of the several letters with the image of that creature whose voice goeth about to imitate pictured by it. For the young A B C scholar will easily remember the force of every character by the very looking at the creature, till the imagination, being strengthened by use, can readily afford all things."

Secular pictures, unless of a strictly didactic character, were not looked upon with favor by our Puritan forefathers, and the drawing of pictures by school children was considered a serious misdemeanor until well into the present century.

The following is from an article in the *American Annals*

of Education and Instruction for the year 1836, Vol. VI., pp. 226-227: "When I attended school it would have been considered a crime to have looked into a book which contained engravings. I recollect of a boy having brought to school a copy of "The Three Hundred Animals," but it was carefully concealed from the teacher and from most of the scholars through fear of punishment. We were so anxious, however, to see the novel figures it contained, the magnified pictures of the louse and the flea, the beehive, the peacock, the elephant and the whale—that we gave pins, marbles, cherry-stones, gooseberries, and even half-pennies to the proprietor for half an hour's perusal of it."

From the earliest period of modern education until within the last twenty-five years, the alphabet method was almost universally employed. As to the manner in which the alphabet was first presented to the child, there was almost every conceivable metamorphosis of form: blocks, toys, dolls, pictures, the child's own body, anything, and any interest of the child that could take the shape of letters, have been seized upon by the method-seekers.

The breaking away from this time-honored system was the signal for a veritable renaissance of method all along the line of the common school curriculum. The more rapid mastery of word symbols by improved methods of teaching opened the door to interest as a factor in the child's school life, and led to an enrichment of the elementary curriculum.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WORD METHOD.

The earliest proposed substitute for the alphabet method was the word and picture method suggested by Comenius. "The very looking upon the thing pictured suggesting the name of the thing will tell the child how the title of the picture is to be read. And thus the whole book being gone over by the bare titles of the pictures, reading can not but be

learned—and indeed too without using any ordinary tedious spelling—that most troublesome torture of wits.”¹

Notwithstanding the above suggestion made by a most eminent educator and at the very dawn of the modern educational movement, no apparent heed was paid to it by the teachers of that period. During the brief period of the schools of the Jansenists, these leaders in methods of education invented and employed in their primary schools the phonetic system of spelling.² The first modern educator to advocate the word method and to set it forth in a clear manner, was Joseph Jacotot (1770–1840). The simple psychological fact that the word acts as a whole like any other object presented to the child had been recognized before by Friedrich Gedike (1754–1803). In the preface to Gedike’s primer which appeared in 1791 under the title: *Kinder buch zur ersten Übung im Lesen ohne ABC und Buchstabieren*, the author says that the natural order of human development is from the whole to the parts, from the results to the causes. Formerly teachers have wearied themselves trying to teach children words through letters. Gedike would reverse this order and through the words and at the same time with the words teach the letters.³

Gedike’s theory, however, seems to have made no impression upon the prevailing methods in the schools, and it was not until Jacotot promulgated his method with a logical argument for its adoption and a detailed description of the first steps in the process, that it met with favor in the schools.⁴

Beginning with a sentence like the following: “Frank and

¹ Comenius, *Orbis Pictus*, Preface, p. xvi, Am. ed., C. W. Bardeen, Pub.

² Painter, *History of Education*, p. 225; Sonnenschein, *Cyclopedia of Education*.

³ Kehr, *Methodik des Deutschen Volksschulunterrichts*, pp. 99–106.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Robert were two little boys about eight years old," Jacotot would have the child repeat the first word several times; then add the second word and repeat both words,—then the third, and so on through the sentence. Thus,—

Frank

Frank and

Frank and Robert

Frank and Robert were, etc.

The pupil is told each word and repeats from the beginning.¹

The development of method in English reading has sprung from two main sources—the one having its origin in the inherent peculiarities of English notation, the other in the psychology of the process of learning to read. The strongest indictment against the alphabet method from the standpoint of the peculiar nature of English notation is that presented by J. M. D. Meiklejohn.² The following is a brief summary of his arraignment and proposed method.

The fact that the English language is a conglomerate of different and distinct local dialects as well as of Norman, French and Latin elements gives rise to numerous contradictions and inconsistencies of notation. It possesses all or parts of all the notations of all these dialects and languages. We have in our language one hundred and four ways of representing to the eye thirteen vowel sounds. Thus short *i* is represented by thirteen symbols, short *e* by twelve, long *e* by eleven, long *a* by thirteen, short *o* by eleven, long *o* by thirteen, short *u* by thirteen, long *u* by twelve. An alphabet of twenty-six letters is made to do the work of forty-five sounds. In this alphabet there are only eight true and fixed quantities. The remaining eighteen have values that vary at different times and in different positions, and sometimes they have no values at all. Some of them, in

¹ Payne, *Lectures on Education*. pp. 175–180.

² J. M. D. Meiklejohn, *The Problem of Learning to Read*.

addition to their ordinary work, do the work of three or four others. A vowel may have from twenty-six to thirty functions, a consonant from two to three. In the purely English part of our speech the letters more frequently possess a historical than a present value. The language contains more than thirteen hundred words whose notation is not in harmony with their pronunciation, and these words are those most frequent in common use. Of the above number eight hundred are monosyllables in daily use,—like too, said, they, brought, one, once. In the most purely English part of our language, letters frequently do not guide, but mislead. Our notation belongs to the fourteenth or previous centuries—our pronunciation to the nineteenth. Our language is overrun with letters which have a philological, not a practical value.

The problem of teaching the child to read is to train him to co-ordinate with and fit to the eye-language (the printed symbol), the ear-language which he already knows. This involves not simply the mastery of twenty-six letters and forty-five sounds, but thorough practice and mastery of one hundred and fifty eight eccentric and inconsistent habits which the English-speaking people have acquired in the course of time of writing down the sounds of their mother tongue. Of these one hundred and fifty-eight habits, some are inconsistent with and destructive of each other. Hence, the experience of the child is not a regular forward movement. He has constantly to read letters that are not there, and to ignore letters that are there, coming upon new forms for the same sound, and new sounds for the same forms.

But Meiklejohn suggests that great defect in one direction points to great power in another. Our language is poor in letters, but rich in words. The wealth of the vocabulary may make up for the poverty of the alphabet. There is no European language with so many words for the same idea. It is possible, through careful selection, to write English that will present no difficulties to the learner except such as belong to a natural self-consistent notation. There exists in the English language a very respectable vocabulary of perfect notation in which sound and symbol are always in agreement.

This harmonious notation represents the twenty-six letters of the alphabet in only one of their functions. Meiklejohn claims that narrative of all kinds, Bible stories, travels, natural history, and even verse, can be written in this perfect notation without much injury to the style and rhythm of the language. The purpose is to have the child thoroughly master one function of each letter. His experience should never contradict itself. The result would be a steadily forward movement and no friction. It is estimated that the loss from friction, due to our eccentric notation, amounts to 1200 hours in a lifetime, and more than a half million dollars is wasted annually in England and Wales in training the child to habits in that which has itself no habits.

Meiklejohn arranges the words for beginners in lists,—as the ox, box, fox list, sun, run, fun, big, pig, gig, etc. Having introduced the first word of a list, other words of the same set are built upon it. Sentences are made from the start. By remembering the first word of a group, the child is able to call the next one and so on. Much use is made of the Word-Maker, a device consisting of three wheels of card board with letters about the peripheries, and so adjusted as, by rotating, to bring these letters into positions to form words. The pupil is expected to manipulate this apparatus with which a great number of permutations are possible.

Like all methods, past and present, that place great emphasis upon some special feature, or demand a selection of material not common to the experience of the race and its literature, Meiklejohn's method has made but little impression upon the teaching of reading in the schools. English must be learned and read as it is from the start, consistencies and inconsistencies included, and any method that fails to take account of this fact will meet with a similar fate, whatever excellent features it may otherwise inherently possess.

The view presented by Meiklejohn is one-sided and partial.

It follows the general tendency of human nature to notice and emphasize exceptions. It would be quite possible to present just as formidable an array of the analogies, uniformities and consistencies of English notation, if one were so disposed.

CHAPTER VI

WORD, PHONIC AND PHONETIC METHODS

FROM Meiklejohn's summary of the various elements which enter into English orthography, it is clear that learning to read English involves difficulties not encountered with most other languages. Hence it was natural, as soon as method in teaching the branches of the common school curriculum became a subject for investigation, that reading should claim a large share of attention. No other branch of the curriculum possesses such a rich and varied retrospect in this regard. "In the history of education there are more theories and methods of teaching reading than of teaching any other subject."¹ If it is true as frequently expressed, that the acquirement of the art of reading constitutes at least half of one's education, and that no other exercise matures a child's mind so rapidly, it is not strange that the reports of the National Educational Association, Barnard's American Journal, The Annals of Education, Horace Mann's Common School Journal, and all modern educational journals, as well as the whole category of modern books on Methods of Teaching, should all give generous space to this subject.

The various methods and devices in use in American schools for mastering the mechanics of reading after the breaking away from the alphabet routine may all be classed under phonic and phonetic systems. Those methods which subordinate the word forms to the ideas they represent at every stage of the process, which depend upon close thought

¹ Parker, *Talks on Pedagogics*, p. 204.

association rather than the manipulation of words, may be classed under word, group, and sentence methods.

The elements entering into the problem may be enumerated as follows:

1. Fundamental.
 - a. The idea.
 - b. The sign or graphic symbol.
 - c. The sound or spoken word.
2. Accessory.
 - a. The object.
 - b. The picture.
 - c. The group—or the relation of the ideas.
 - d. The writing of the word.
 - e. The psychology of the process.
 - f. The physiology of the process.

It will be observed that there are enough factors involved in the problem to offer a very wide range of permutations.

The starting-point of one method or system of teaching has usually been the weak spot or neglected feature in some other method. Notwithstanding the extreme emphasis placed upon some special feature, as in case of the phonic method, the Leigh method, the word method, etc., the result of this zig-zag course has been, on the whole, a forward movement.

"How to teach children to read, and what they should read, are two of the oldest and most complicated, as well as most important problems of pedagogy.

"The growing agreement that there is no one and only orthodox way of teaching and learning this greatest and hardest of all the arts, in which ear, mouth, eye and hand must each in turn train the others to automatic perfection, in ways hard and easy, by devices old and new, mechanically and consciously, actively and passively, of things familiar and unknown, and by alternately resting and modulating

from one set of faculties to another, secure mental unity and school economy, both intellectual and material—this is a great gain and seems now secure.”¹

The breaking away from the alphabet method in American schools was made with extreme caution. The first recognition that I have found of any other method by American compilers is contained in the prefatory statement of Samuel Worcester’s “Primer of the English Language for the use of families and schools,” published in 1828. The author takes the following remarkably advanced position for his time: “It is not, perhaps, very important that a child should know the letters before it begins to read. It may learn first to read words by seeing them, hearing them pronounced, and having their meanings illustrated, and afterwards it may learn to analyze them or name the letters of which they are composed.”

The next compiler to advocate this method was the author of the Bumstead Primary Readers, published in 1840–43. The first book of this series was arranged for beginners with the word-method, greatly to the satisfaction of Horace Mann.² The innovation is very modestly introduced. Fifteen words may be learned before the child’s attention is called to the letters—a less number, if that is thought to be too many. The author’s position upon this point is uncompromising: “Never require a scholar to spell a word before he has so far learned it as to be able to read it.” In reviewing this series of readers, Mr. Mann said that he had advocated the word-method for many years. In the Common School Journal, in 1840, he severely attacked the alphabet method in the following manner:

“Let us examine a line with which we are all familiar,—the initiatory sentence in Webster’s old spelling-book:

¹ Hall, *How to Teach Reading*, pp. 1 and 15.

² *The Common School Journal for 1843*, Vol. V, p. 361.

“ ‘No man may put off the law of God.’

“The manner in which we were taught to read this was as follows: ‘En-o no, emm-ai-en, man, emm-ai-wy, may, pee-you-tee, put, o-double eff, off, tee-aitch-ee, the, ell-ai-double you, law, o-eff, of, gee-o-dee, God.’

“What can be more absurd than this? Can we wonder that the progress of a child should be slow, when we place such unnecessary impediments as these in his way?”¹

Mr. Mann was not the first, although perhaps the most influential opponent of the alphabet method in this country. In 1790, Dr. Thornton, who for many years presided over the Patent Office in Washington, perceiving the absurdity of learning to read by the repetition of sounds having no similarity to those of the words, published a pamphlet entitled, “Cadmus, or a Treatise on Written Language,” in which he proposed that every letter should be named according to its power, and, as there are more sounds than letters in the English language, he introduced a sufficient number of new characters to supply the deficiency,² thus advocating a phonetic system, and anticipating by three quarters of a century, the “pronouncing orthography” of Dr. Edwin Leigh.

These reformers, however, were like voices crying in the wilderness. It was many years after this before the word or the phonetic method gained a firm foothold in American schools, so thoroughly intrenched was the old alphabet method. I think it is fair to conclude that the latter passed out of a majority of the city schools during the decade of 1870-80, and from the rural schools ten years later. It is still used in many schools of the country.

In the Annual Report of the Board of Education of Boston for 1872, Superintendent, John D. Philbrick, makes a

¹ *The Common School Journal for 1840*, Vol. II, p. 301.

² *Ibid.*

strong plea for the spelling-book, and says that the great antagonist of the speller is the modern educational maxim: "Ideas before words." He further states that "reading is spelling on the book, naming the letters and syllabifying."¹

"Naming the letters and syllabifying" was characteristic of the extreme detail into which not only beginning but also advanced work was carried. Analysis seems to have played the leading rôle in all stages of the work. In Hofwyl's Sketches in 1832² is the following brief description of the current method of teaching reading: "An excellent teacher, of thirty or forty years' experience, says that half a page is as much as his pupils can usually read to advantage in half an hour, although they are select pupils from ten to eighteen years of age. I am personally acquainted with several instructors of high reputation and long experience who pursue a similar course, only they carry it further. One of them often spends from twenty to thirty minutes on six or eight lines of common prose and without at all fatiguing his pupils. The pupils spell and define the words, tell their synonyms and opposites, write and paraphrase the sentence or paragraph; analyze and reduce it to its simplest sentences; analyze the words, parse the whole sentence or paragraph and recite the history, geography, biography, etc., to which there may be a reference in the sentence."

The word method made but little headway previous to 1870. It developed from no particular center, but progressive teachers and students of method in different parts of the country gradually came to see that as the child uses words but knows nothing of their elements, so should he learn the printed symbols as wholes without analysis or synthesis; that as in oral language he learns by the hear and say method, so

¹ *Annual Report of Board of Education*, p. 240.

² *Annals of Education for 1832*, Vol. II, p. 59.

in graphic language he may learn by the "look and say" method without spelling or phonetic analysis. Lord Lytton makes Dr. Herman say in *The Caxtons*: "A more lying, roundabout, puzzle-headed delusion than that by which we confuse the clear instincts of truth in our accursed systems of spelling, was never concocted by the father of falsehood. For instance take the monosyllable *cat*. What a brazen forehead you must have when you say to an infant c, a, t—spell cat: that is, three sounds forming a totally opposite compound—opposite in every detail, opposite in the whole—compose a poor little monosyllable, which, if you would but say the simple truth, the child will learn to spell merely by looking at it!"¹

J. Russell Webb, author of the *Normal Readers*, has probably done more than any other educator to develop the word method in this country. He has frequently been mentioned as the author of the method, and has so advertised his own name in the title page of the *Analytical Second Reader* of 1866: "By Richard Edwards, LL. D., and J. Russel Webb, author of the *Normal Readers* and the *Word Method*."

The word-method was a great insight, and did more to relieve children from the torture of spelling-book and primer than any other discovery of the century. But its advantage as a beginning-method was its weakness for later stages of the work. The word, as a whole, is the natural beginning, but analysis and synthesis must soon follow if the child is to become independent in meeting new words. This weakness, or rather limitation, led many to hold more tenaciously than ever to the old alphabet-method, which, after all, did furnish the child a key, though a clumsy, illogical and mechanical one, by which he could unaided make out new words.

¹ Bulwer-Lytton, *The Caxtons*, p. 44.

Thoughtful teachers turned to the phonic-method as a remedy. It was an old method, having been used by the Jansenists of Port Royal in their primary schools in the seventeenth century. But it took a new start in American schools. As the names of the letters could not directly lead to the sound of the word, the idea seemed reasonable at first sight to teach their powers instead. "How can three sounds which run thus to the ear, see—ch—tee compose cat? Don't they rather compose the sound see—ch—te, or ceaty? How can a system of education flourish that begins by so monstrous a falsehood, which the sense of hearing suffices to contradict? No wonder that the horn-book is the despair of mothers!"¹

The phonic plan spells words by the succession of sounds instead of by letters. It thus employed forty-four instead of twenty-six characters. Like the word method, it developed from no particular center, but was tried as an experiment in different parts of the country in the fifties and sixties. It was short-lived wherever introduced. The strength of the phonic method lay in the independent power it gave to the child in mastering new words, in which respect it was far superior to the alphabet method and squarely met the weak point in the word method, which was the main cause of its development. Its weakness lay in the fact that it strengthened the natural tendency, already prevalent in many children, to spell by sound, and was more or less of a stumbling-block to all children in the tortuous path of English orthography. As a remedy for this defect, the Phonetic method was devised, which is but a modification of the Phonic method with special features of its own intended to meet the objections urged against the older plan. The main difficulty to overcome was that arising from the disparity between the number of letters in the alphabet and the number of elementary sounds. To

¹ Bulwer-Lytton, *The Castles*, p. 45.

meet this difficulty, Dr. Edwin Leigh, following the suggestion made by Dr. Thornton in 1790, already mentioned, invented the "Pronouncing Orthography," which appeared in 1864 and was patented four years later. Each letter had as many special forms as it had sounds. The various forms of letters were slight modifications of the one common form of ordinary orthography. Silent letters were printed in hair lines. It was thus a phonetic system intended to bridge the chasm between the alphabet method and the phonic method, piecing out the alphabet by furnishing a character for each sound and avoiding, as far as possible, the entire separation of sound and symbol, often resulting from a phonic system.

It is interesting to note the enthusiasm with which the advocates of the "pronouncing orthography" present its merits: "In the pronouncing orthography we have a happy solution of the much-labored inquiry after a rational method of bringing children into possession of a knowledge of written English."¹ Choice aphorisms from James Mill, Sir William Hamilton and other great writers and scholars are quoted in support of Dr. Leigh's method; and the marvelous attainments of "the children" taught by the use of the Phonetic Primer are not wanting—as they never are—to prove the soundness of the theory. The system was quickly introduced into the schools of St. Louis, New York, Washington, Boston, and many other cities.² The reports from these places were all favorable and it would seem as though the problem of teaching reading, or at least the ready and thorough mastery of the formal process, had been solved. Since the system was strictly phonetic and also phonotypic, the child was called upon to make a minute literal inspection of every word. From "seeing things large," which the

¹ *Proceedings of the National Educational Association*, 1873, pp. 262-268.

² *Proceedings of the National Educational Association*, 1873, pp. 262-270.

child does by nature, he was required at the beginning to do microscopic work with each word, minute, careful, inspection being necessary to determine the value of each letter. Dr. Leigh published his own series of readers, but his pronouncing orthography was introduced into a number of other series. In the St. Louis schools, McGuffey's series was used. "Pronouncing print" was for a time an "up-to-date" feature of several series.

The necessity for using peculiarly printed books, and the variation given to the word forms, making them more or less trying to the eyes, were obstacles which were not overcome by the advantages claimed for the system. The mechanical effort required in determining phonetic values rendered intellectual effort almost impossible. Like the phonic method and Meiklejohn's method, it failed to take account of the language as it is, and attempted a more or less arbitrary means of approach. "Experience goes far to show that none of the advantages claimed by the phonetic method will counterbalance the confusion arising from the use of two alphabets, while the multiplication of symbols must have a bad effect upon the pupil's progress in correct orthoepy."¹

¹ Barnard's *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 10, p. 519.

CHAPTER VII

MIXED METHODS

OUT of the four methods already enumerated, viz., the alphabet, word, phonic and phonetic methods, various mixed methods have arisen within the last ten years. Of these, the most widely known are the "Synthetic Sound System," by Rebecca C. Pollard, the "Rational Method," by Edward G. Ward, Supt. of Brooklyn schools, and the Sentence Method, whose earliest and most earnest advocate was George L. Farnham, A. M.

No theory has ever had more ardent supporters or been promulgated by more zealous advocates than the Pollard Synthetic Method. It was a vigorous reaction against the helpless condition in which the word method leaves the children, when unwisely used or used exclusively.

"Instead of teaching the word as a whole and afterward subjecting it to phonic analysis, is it not infinitely better to take the sounds of the letters for our starting point, and with these sounds lay a foundation, firm and broad, upon which we can build whole families of words for instant recognition?"¹

The elementary sounds are introduced and taught by means of an extremely formal story called "The Johnny Story." In this story an effort is made to have the child discover these sounds in nature—in the bleating of the lamb, *ā*, the puff of the steam-boat, *p*, the "kitty's hiss," *f*, the growl of the dog, *r*, etc. Enough of the story is related each day

¹ Pollard's *Manual of Synthetic Reading and Spelling*, Preface, pp. 3-4.
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to introduce one new sound. Much use is made of stencil pictures to illustrate the story. Sounds are sung to the musical scale, and then arranged and sung to familiar tunes, such as Yankee Doodle, Greenville, "Hold the Fort," etc. "Also, print letters,—songs, and leave upon the board for daily singing, as to the air of 'Yankee Doodle,' sing (placing the diacritical mark above each vowel :

"a, m, a, m, a, m a, m,
n, l, n, l, n, l,
v, w, v, w, v, w, v, w,
m, n, l, a, v, n."

Words are grouped and presented in "families" as the *ap*, *ack* and *at* families. Much time is spent in having the children build words out of sounds previously learned, indicating all of the sounds by diacritical marks. Children mark all words in their spelling and reading lessons until facility in recognizing phonic values is thoroughly acquired. A great many little devices are employed for the purpose of enlivening with artificial interest an almost endless detail.

In contrast with the natural order of learning to talk, and with the word method, the Synthetic Method would have the word precede the idea, and the phonic elements precede the word. In phonic synthesis, the child gets the word through marking, in phonic analysis, he gets the marking through the word.

The method claims the following : Certainty and independence in recognizing words, a complete system of vocal training, distinct articulation and accurate pronunciation by simple rules. It makes good spellers by using and marking all the letters of a word. It seeks to overcome the resistance of words in beginning reading by a direct formal process. Its strength lies in concentration ; it aims at one thing only—the mastery of word structure and word calling. The system

requires its own special books and special preparation on the part of teachers.

The Pollard Synthetic Method has been widely introduced in this country, and is used from New England to the Pacific coast, but its more extensive adoption has been in the cities of the west and northwest.

The "Rational method" was introduced into the schools of Brooklyn and New York a few years ago. It is similar in some respects to the Pollard method. It is less mechanical, however, and provides for a double line of work, the sentence or thought exercises and the phonetic practice. Both are carried forward from the beginning in separate periods. The following terms give the main features of the system:¹

Phonogram. A written or printed representation of a sound, either simple or compound. Examples: f, s, l, ing, ight.

Sight word. A word that has been taught as a whole, and is, therefore, recognized by sight alone.

Phonetic word. A word to be read by means of its phonograms.

Sight Reading. The reading of sight words either singly or in sentences.

Phonetic Reading. The reading of phonetic words either singly or in sentences.

Simple Phonogram. A phonogram containing but one letter. Examples: s, i, ð.

(Excepting i, which represents a union of the sounds of ā and ē, the simple phonograms stand for one sound each.)

Compound phonogram. A phonogram containing more than one letter. Examples: ing, ight, ip, un, ness.

(Every compound phonogram represents a compound sound, which, however, is taught as a unit.)

¹ See *New York Teachers' Monographs*, Nov., 1898, pp. 4-5.

Word phonogram. A sight word used as a phonogram in the representation of a longer word. Examples: old in fold, ail in sail, an in man.

The following are the leading features of the phonetic part of the work:¹

1. The presentation of the sounds and their symbols (phonograms) in a rational order.
2. The teaching of an initial stock of phonograms before any phonetic reading is done.
3. The training of the ear in the perception of phonetic blends before phonetic reading is begun.
4. An extensive and systematic use of word-phonograms and other compound phonograms.
5. A careful grading of the phonetic words introduced.
6. The gradual introduction of phonetic words into all the sentence reading.
7. Separate daily drills in the recognition of the individual phonograms, and the reading of single phonetic words.

It will be noted from the above that the "rational method" is a combination of the sentence and the phonetic methods. The sentence method is used first as principal, because of its value in developing a habit of reading thoughtfully, and afterwards as auxiliary, to remedy the shortcomings of the phonetic method, and increase the stock of word phonograms. The phonetic method, which is introduced by easy stages during the ascendancy of the sentence method, finally becomes itself the principal means of progress.²

There is much less apparatus in the way of artificial devices employed in the "rational" than in the "synthetic" method. The rational method has recently been introduced

¹ See *Manual of Instruction for the Rational Method*.

² *New York Teachers' Monographs*, Nov. 1898, p. 4.

into the schools of Buffalo, Albany, Lowell, Mass., Princeton, N. J., Pawtucket, R. I. and several other eastern cities.

Aside from these two highly elaborated phonetic systems, there are thousands of teachers in this country now who gradually introduce phonetics after the first steps have been taken, in which words as wholes are presented and used in short sentences and stories. Analysis of words into single and group sounds, noting the recurrence of letters in certain groups with fixed sounds, etc., without diacritical marking, mutilation of any sort, or any device but the clean printed page, proceeds from day to day in connection with the thought work and with but slight digression from it. The result of the premature piece-meal inspection of words, whether by analysis or synthesis, seriously interferes with the action of words as wholes, gives them undue prominence as having worth in themselves beyond that of mere symbols, and inhibits all thought or interest in what is read. Moreover, children that form the habit of looking at the parts of a word before seeing the word as a whole, are slow readers as long as this habit persists, and the habit when once formed is not easily overcome. "Children are so automatic and imitative, have such a genius for the facile acquisition of habit, and are so easily stupefied by reasons and explanations, that some seem to learn to read and write so mechanically as to get by it no trace whatever of really mental discipline or development."¹ And why should they not? Since reading is a means, not an end, the simpler the process, the better.

From the word-method it was a natural step to the sentence-method. Words might be treated as units independent of sentences, and reading thus become a series of independent pronunciations, or the word could be regarded as a

¹ Hall, *How to Teach Reading*, pp. 13-14.

member of a sentence group, and the unit of exercise become the thought of the sentence. The very first lesson may be a sentence, and reading from the start become the expression of thought, never simply the calling of words. The child does not attempt to read until every word in the sentence is known and the thought expressed is his own. Experiments with the sentence-method began as early as 1870.¹ But few teachers, however, went beyond the word or phonetic method until fifteen or twenty years later. On the other hand, many teachers have used the sentence-method without calling it by that name. That is, they have presented words as wholes and used them in short sentences and stories from the start.

Making thought rather than form the center and controlling factor in learning to read has greatly enriched the exercise by the many-sided content which now enters into it. It is no longer words simply, but object, form, color, number, movement, writing, picture making, and literature. In the upper grades of the elementary school instead of mere scraps it is lusty draughts from the sparkling fountains of juvenile literature. The question naturally arises—what is the next step in the development of method?

Rational progress in educational theories and methods is usually promoted by drawing on life's actual experiences outside the highly organized institution known as the school. As the school gets closer to life, it becomes more truly educative. When it organizes its processes apart from the real experiences of life, it becomes more artificial and less educative. The ideal school is the ideal life for the time being. As spoken language is a form of expression, and springs from an inner felt need in the child's actual experience, so may printed language serve the same purpose. The first

¹ Farnham, *The Sentence Method of Reading*, Preface, p. iv.

step in teaching reading is to provide an experience out of which thought and its appropriate expression in printed form may arise. A mere class-room experience fixed up for the occasion and therefore artificial, may answer the purpose of the methods above mentioned. But it is not life, it is only playing at life. The process of learning to read must come into as necessary relations to the child's actual life as learning to talk. "The powers of speech and of understanding what is said, both come to a child by a process so simple and so natural that he is conscious of no effort to acquire them. The vital point is to so change the function of the eye that it will look upon written or printed characters, not as objects to be recognized for their own sake, but as directly calling into conscious being past experiences, and so becoming representatives of thought."¹ "The teaching of reading is to be unconsciously, on the part of the pupils, an auxiliary to the development of thought; the difficulties of the written and printed word being overcome by the energy aroused by intrinsic thought. The presentation of the words and sentences at the proper moment will serve to enhance the thought itself, because the printed words are made a necessity and as such will react upon the mind and assist in mental action. When a sentence which has grown out of a child's investigations, and has been made by the child itself, appears upon the blackboard and is read by the child, this action cannot fail to continue and enhance the original thought."² The last assertion will read as truly if reversed, viz: the original thought and its necessity through experience can not fail to continue and enhance the sentence form in which it is expressed: The richer the thought and the deeper the interest, the fewer the number of associations necessary to fix the word and sentence forms.

¹ Farnham, *The Sentence Method of Reading*, Preface, p. 14.

² Parker, *Talks on Pedagogics*, pp. 204-205.

Economy of time spent in learning to read depends far more upon these two factors than upon any phonetic device, however clever. Baked letters and sweetened sounds still prevail with artisan teachers. Our next forward step lies in the direction of stronger motivation. The worth-while-ness of the process must arise out of the experience of the child.

The order of development has been from the gross forms of external and accidental associations of letters and words with objects, now appealing to the appetite (ginger-bread methods), now the play interest (battledores), now industry (samplers)—on through the various mechanical devices of phonics and phonetics to the sentence method in which thought vitalizes the whole process. When the thought content of the first steps in reading, as well as all later ones, is not simply chosen for the purpose, but is the child's own, arising out of his inner experience, and demanding expression by inner necessity, then will learning to read become as natural as learning to talk, and the problem of pedagogy in this subject will be solved.

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